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BROADWAY BILLY Shadows London Slums; OR, THE Mysterious Whitechapel Tragedy.

BY J. C. COWRICK.

CHAPTER I.

A DEED DONE IN THE DARK.
"COME, New York Special, get your hat;
we have got a case now to test your skill."

"I HAILED A CABBIE TO BRING HIS LANTERN."

It was early morning, and Sergeant Cliff of Scotland Yard had rung the bell of Broadway Billy's London lodging in an imperative manner.

Asking to be shown immediately to Billy Weston's room, he had there likewise knocked briskly, and as soon as the door was opened greeted his young American confrere in the words quoted.

"What's up?" asked Billy, hurriedly making ready.

"A mysterious murder is reported over in the Whitechapel district."

"Ha! Jack the Ripper, again? It was in Whitechapel that he got in his fine work, if I remember aright."

"Yes, you have it straight; but whether this was his work or not, we can't say. Are you ready? Come along, then."

Billy had prepared quickly, and a minute later he and the sergeant were in a hansom and driving furiously eastward through Fleet street and up Ludgate Hill.

As they rode along Sergeant Cliff gave Billy further particulars of the case. At an early hour a constable discovered, in the Jewish quarter, the body of a young woman horribly hacked with a knife.

The report to the Yard stated that the young woman was unknown in the neighborhood where found. She appeared to be a member of the "frail sisterhood," but whether this was true or not was as yet uncertain. She had been stabbed many times, as if intense hatred had been the motive.

This was all the sergeant knew, and of course could tell no more.

The hansom rattled and jolted onward, past St. Paul's, along Cheapside, through Cornhill, Leadenhall, and Aldgate High street; turning from the latter into Houndsditch.

Houndsditch, with the Minories, is the stronghold of the Jews in London, and it was in this neighborhood the crime had been discovered.

The hansom turned into a narrow thoroughfare on the right, out of Houndsditch, then into a lane that was even more narrow, and finally into an alley which was still worse in respect to narrowness and general forbidding appearance.

Here, presently, it stopped, at a point where a considerable crowd was congregated: men, women and children commingled. The men, for the most part, were sullen-looking and indolent, and the women hard-visaged and slatternly, while the children portrayed faithfully a deplorable social state.

The moment the hansom stopped Sergeant Cliff stepped out and pushed his way through the crowd to where several constables stood around a body that lay stretched upon straw.

Broadway Billy closely followed.

They beheld the body of a young woman, respectably dressed and apparently twenty years of age, one who in life had been good-looking.

One of the constables was the man who had first discovered the crime.

His name was Bole.

"Tell me all you know about this matter," demanded Sergeant Cliff. "Where was it you found the body?"

"It was right here," the man answered. "I was a-passing through this way, just at daybreak. There she was, a-settin' up like she was asleep."

"At what time had you passed through here before?"

"Something after two o'clock."

"And the body was not here then?"

"It was not; or if it was I missed it in the pouring rain. I hailed a cabbie to bring his lantern for it's a precious dark hole here, you know."

"And you did not find the weapon with which the deed was done? You found nothing that may serve us for a clue?"

"No; the knife was missing, and there wasn't a thing anywhere around that I could

see. And there was no blood, except a little close to where the body was. It is a puzzler."

"Why do you call it that?"

"Because nobody around here has ever seen the party before, and she must be a stranger in this neighborhood. Then, she don't look quite like the kind you would at first take her to 'a' been. Looks to me as if she had been killed somewhere else and brought here."

"Hum."

With that Sergeant Cliff became silent, and clasping his hands behind his back, looked searchingly around, like a bloodhound trying to pick up a trail.

Broadway Billy had been using his eyes to the best advantage while he listened to what was being said, taking in everything that was to be seen. Not only did he observe the body and surrounding objects, but he closely scanned the crowd.

On two points Billy quite agreed with the constable: He believed the young woman had been killed somewhere else and brought here, and that she did not belong to the class we have mentioned. In the first place, there was too little blood around; and secondly, her face belied that character.

He looked carefully at the spot where the body had been found, and from that point stepped to the middle of the narrow street.

Here he closely scrutinized the ground, moving in a circle which he gradually widened.

The crowd made room for him whichever way he moved.

Apparently satisfied with this, he stepped to the body to make a more careful examination of that.

He looked intently at the face, as if fixing the features in his mind, and then carefully at the hands, particularly observing the fingers of each.

Sergeant Cliff glanced at him and smiled, and presently went through the same process himself, but carrying his examination further. He counted the number of times the victim had been stabbed.

"Are you satisfied?" he finally asked of Billy.

"Yes, for the present," Billy answered.

They drew apart from the crowd for a moment to consult.

"Constable Bole is a sharp fellow," Cliff remarked. "I agree with him in what he says."

"So do I," admitted Billy. "You have got hold of a mystery here, Sergeant Cliff. There is something out of the usual back of all this, and I am eager to know what it is."

"What have you been able to glean?"

"That the body was brought here, probably in a four-wheeler, which may have been drawn by a white horse. This is speculation. For facts, the dead young woman was left-handed, and on that hand wore a ring, which is now missing. The gown she has on was never made for her."

Sergeant Cliff was looking at Billy intently.

"Here is a rum go!" he exclaimed. "You have beaten me at my own game, I'll be bound. You must have looked closer than I did. How do you know these things? How on earth can you tell the body was brought here in a four-wheeler drawn by a white horse? If I didn't know you, Weston, I would think you are talking for effect, and nothing more."

"Come this way," Billy made rejoinder, drawing his friend to the middle of the narrow thoroughfare. "You see here are three or four drops of blood together on the cobbles. It was where the body was taken out of the vehicle. Then you notice those two white spots there on the opposite curb? That is where the hind wheel struck when the cab was turned. A hansom, with only two wheels, could have been turned in a narrower space."

"Yes, yes; but, the color of the horse?"

"If a horse will switch its tail at any time, Sergeant Cliff, it is when being backed to turn. If you look close just here you will see a couple of white hairs from a horse's tail. I simply put two and two together, and add up the sum. Still, as I said, this is only speculation. As to the young woman's having been left-handed, I took note that she has done sewing, more or less, and the marks of the needle prove which hand she used. Then, the mark where the ring was worn is there to be seen. It is plain as day."

"Yes, I noticed these points; but, you are away ahead of me regarding the proof that she was brought here in a four-wheeler drawn by a white horse; though I must agree with you that it looks clear enough that such was the case. Maybe you can tell me something more."

"No, I am at the end of my rope," answered Billy, laughing.

They studied the matter still further, but gleaned no additional points, and at length Sergeant Cliff gave directions to have the body removed, when he and Billy entered their hansom and drove away.

The body was taken to the usual place, where a thorough examination was made by a surgeon. To this place Cliff and Broadway Billy had repaired, to learn what more the examination might reveal. The body had no less than seventeen wounds, any one of which, except four, was sufficient to have caused death. Further that other speculation made by Constable Bole was verified.

It was a perplexing case, true enough, and one to try detective skill.

CHAPTER II.

THE POWER OF THE PRESS PROVED.

SCOTLAND YARD was baffled.

A close investigation of the mysterious murder had revealed nothing.

The neighborhood where the body of the young woman was found had been scoured for information without avail.

It seemed plain enough that the body must have been brought there. But, no one could be found who had seen or heard a cab in that vicinity during the night.

The day had been spent in hard and earnest work, on the part of the police, and was now drawing to a close without anything having been accomplished. The victim's identity still remained unestablished.

The crime had been discovered too late for the morning newspapers to publish an account of it, but the evening papers came out with startling headlines, giving all the horrible details, together with a penciled likeness of the dead girl, and London society was shocked.

Broadway Billy was at Scotland Yard with Sergeant Cliff, the latter consulting with the inspector, when a man of middle age entered, his handkerchief in one hand and a copy of the *Evening Standard* in the other.

He was a well-dressed man, with a florid face, protruding eyes, and a nose which a physiognomist would have denominated "avaricious, sometimes unscrupulous."

"Do I address the Inspector of Police?" he asked.

"You do, sir," that official promptly made answer.

The man dropped upon a chair, overcome with emotion, and applied his handkerchief to his eyes.

The inspector, Sergeant Cliff, and Broadway, too, had guessed his errand, for the newspaper was so folded as to show the picture of the murdered girl.

It was some moments before the man ventured to speak further.

Presently he did so.

"I am here upon a sad errand, sir," he

said. "The victim of this horrible murder was my niece."

He held out the newspaper, pointing with his finger to the sketched likeness of the dead girl, and his voice trembled with suppressed emotion.

"What was the young woman's name?" asked the inspector.

"Her name was Alma Keeler."

"And your own?"

"Is Edwin Keeler."

"Where is your residence?"

The address was given, a respectable street toward the West End.

"Very well, Mr. Keeler. Now please tell us all you can of this dreadful business."

"A dreadful business, indeed. You have rightly called it, sir. Nothing must be left undone to find and punish the heartless slayer of my dead brother's child."

"Be assured, sir, that nothing will be left undone. Now that we know who the young woman was, that is a long step in the right direction, and we shall probably soon be able to find a clue."

"And what do you desire me to tell you?"

"All you can, as I said. Did you get your first knowledge of the crime from the newspaper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your niece, then, did not reside with you at the address you have given us, I take it?"

"On the contrary, she did."

"Did you not think strange of her absence, then? How did you account for it, before the newspaper brought the terrible truth to you?"

"I was surprised, and somewhat alarmed, when the servant told me this morning that my niece had not slept in her room and was not in the house, but she had left a note for me."

"A note, eh?"

"Yes; it said she had gone to see her lover, and bade me not be alarmed if she did not return early. It was intended that I should find it last night. I was somewhat alarmed, as I say, but made up my mind that the fact of the matter was she had gone off and got married."

"Who was her lover?"

"His name is Horace Hurst."

"Do you think he had anything to do with the murder?"

"I can hardly believe he had; but, that is for the police to determine. Somebody killed her."

"What led you to buy the *Evening Standard* to-day?"

"Oh, I take it regularly, sir."

"It must have been a shock to you, when you saw the dead features of your niece here in print."

"It was, it was. I came near dropping to the floor at the sight. See the terrible headlines, and right under them the dead face of my brother's child.—My God! 'tis frightful!"

"And you came straight here?"

"With all possible haste, as soon as I could do anything."

"Well, and this man Hurst: Was he your niece's lover with your approval? I infer you were her guardian."

"It was not with my approval, though I had not forbidden it. I had advised the child against marrying him, but she was blindly in love and I expected my advice to be disregarded."

"Have you read the full account of the crime?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think about it? Can you throw any additional light upon it?"

"It is all a great, bewildering enigma to me, sir. Were it not for the likeness here, I would never dream it could be Alma Keeler."

"Why not?"

"Why should I? Think of the place

where the body was found. Think of the character they imputed to her. How could I imagine it was my niece? But the picture—there was no doubting that."

"Still, there may be a mistake."

"Impossible, if the picture is a faithful likeness."

"You appear to have no doubt whatever. You have not seen the body?"

"No, I came straight here. How can I doubt? Here is Alma Keeler's face, if I ever saw it."

"There is no doubting your conviction upon that point, Mr. Keeler. The fact of your coming here is enough. But, you must see the body and positively identify it. We will go and look at it."

The inspector put on his hat, gave Cliff and Broadway Billy a signal, and all left the office together.

Arriving at their destination, Mr. Keeler identified the body immediately.

He covered his eyes and wept aloud.

"There can be no question about the identity of the victim," the inspector remarked. "Sergeant Cliff, and you, Mr. Weston, you have now something to work upon. Let me see what you can do."

At this mention of their names, Mr. Keeler favored Cliff and Billy with a stare.

"May I ask the gentleman a question?" Broadway Billy spoke up.

"Certainly, young sir," the man himself answered.

"Had your niece any mark upon her body by which you can make your identification doubly certain?"

"Good Heavens! Don't you suppose I know my own niece, whom I have seen every day of my life for the past seven years? But, no, she had no such mark, far as I am aware."

"Did she wear a ring?"

"Yes, one, on the third finger of her left hand."

"And she was left-handed?"

"Who said she was?"

"I ask you?"

"No, she was *not* left-handed. Mr. Inspector, I hope you will intrust this matter to older heads than his."

The inspector and Sergeant Cliff had exchanged a meaning glance.

Billy bowed and stepped back respectfully.

"The best men on the force have the matter in hand, Mr. Keeler," the inspector made response. "We shall probably be able to solve the mystery in a short time, now. At any rate, I hope so."

Mr. Keeler saw about the business of having the body removed to his residence, and returned home. One point had been cleared up, but beyond that the matter was as much a mystery as it had been before. In the minds of Sergeant Cliff and Broadway Billy it was perhaps even more so.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT BROADWAY BILLY BELIEVED.

BROADWAY BILLY and Sergeant Cliff left the dead-house together.

They were not by any means the only detectives on the case, but they were the only ones in whom we have direct interest.

"Well, Weston, we have now something to work upon, as the inspector said," observed Sergeant Cliff, as they came away. "It only remains for us to get down to business."

"And I purpose doing that straightway," Billy responded.

"But, you have raised a doubt."

"How's that?"

"You seemed to question whether this young woman really was Mr. Keeler's niece, as he claims."

"And yet there does not appear room for any question. His identification was too positive to admit of doubt. And yet he declares that his niece was not left handed."

"While we have agreed that this young woman was left handed."

"Exactly."

"Do you think we can be mistaken?"

"I never saw a right-handed woman sew left-handed, did you?"

"No."

"And the marks on this girl's finger prove that she did sew left handed, if they prove anything at all."

"That I have to admit. What, then, do you make of it?"

"A mystery."

"And one for us to clear up."

"If we can."

They talked the matter over at length, and finally separated, each to attack the enigma from a different quarter.

Both had heard the story told by Edwin Keeler, and they had his address and the name and address of Horace Hurst, whom Keeler had mentioned as the young lady's lover.

Sergeant Cliff chose to look after Horace Hurst, against whom he had some suspicion, and Billy set out for the Keeler residence. Cliff had taken the most promising of the two trails, but Billy seemed to be perfectly satisfied with what had been left for him.

"It's all right, sergeant," he said, speaking to himself, after he and Cliff had parted. "You are the older, and of course have the right to choose, and you are welcome to your choice; I prefer to look after Mr. Keeler. *I don't like his nose.*"

The last words were spoken with a meaning emphasis.

On reaching his destination Billy rung the bell and asked to see Mr. Keeler, giving his name.

He was shown first into the reception-room, but afterward was conducted to a little sitting-room further back, where he found Mr. Keeler alone with his sorrow.

"Well, young man, what is it?"

Mr. Keeler put the question rather cap-tiously, without giving his caller the chance to speak first or asking him to be seated.

"I have called to learn more regarding your murdered niece," Billy civilly responded.

"And I believe I asked the inspector of police to intrust this case to older heads than yours. Those were my very words, I believe."

"But, since he has not seen fit to remove me, sir, my business is to solve the mystery if I can. I hope to be able to bring the murderer to account for his heinous crime."

"Ahem! You speak with boyish over-confidence. What is your name, young man, and who are you, anyhow?"

"My name is William Weston, and I am from New York."

"Ah! So, you are the young American detective the papers made so much ado about a short time ago."

"I believe my name was mentioned in the papers, sir. But, this is not to the point: What more can you tell me about your niece? Have you any suspicion against any person?"

"There is *one* thing I want to tell you, young man, and that is, that I did not like the manner in which you doubted my identification of the body at the dead-house. Do you suppose I would have gone to the police if I had not been sure? The likeness in the paper was enough."

"I did not doubt your conviction, sir, but—"

"But nothing!" excitedly. "As if there could be room for a mistake! Look here," rising hastily, "I want you to be convinced on that point. Here is a photograph of my niece, taken about a year ago. Take it and compare it with the likeness in the newspaper, and then tell me there can be a mistake if you dare! You have seen the body; what say you now?"

The man had stepped to a table and caught up a photograph album, which he opened while speaking, and as he concluded he thrust it forward under Billy's notice pointing with his finger.

Billy took the album out of his hands and carefully compared the likenesses, judging of them both by the mental picture he had taken of the features of the dead girl.

He was convinced, but not in the manner Mr. Keeler intended he should be.

If this photograph was a faithful likeness of Alma Keeler, he did not believe that the murdered young woman was she.

"I have no longer any doubt," he said, handing the album back again to Mr. Keeler. "In fact, sir, I had no reason to doubt your word in the matter, but detectives require proofs."

"And you have now seen the proof. This photograph was taken about a year ago, as I said, while this newspaper likeness was sketched from the dead face of the poor child; but I, who knew her so well, could not be mistaken. Would to God that I were!"

He had put the album back in its place, and now he resumed his chair, asking Billy to be seated.

Billy had scored a point. While convinced that the dead girl was *not* Alma Keeler, he had given Mr. Keeler the impression that his conviction was to the contrary.

What the mystery was, Billy could not guess, of course, but the more he saw of Edwin Keeler the less he "liked his nose."

"Well, what more can you tell me about your niece?" he pressed his inquiries.

"What do you want to know? I am anxious to give the police all the aid in my power, young man, in this terrible business."

"I asked you if you have suspicion against any person."

"No, sir, I have not."

"Is any one benefited by your niece's death?"

"No one, unless it is I, myself. I will come in for the estate."

"Is the estate a large one?"

"It is."

"And your brother's child was the only person who stood in the way of your possessing it?"

"Exactly. But, the police will hardly suspect me of this heinous crime on that account. My niece loved me, and I could have had the estate for the asking, almost."

"Had she come into possession of it herself?"

"No, but would on coming of age."

"When would that have been?"

"In about ten months."

"What about her lover, this Horace Hurst you mentioned? Does he gain anything by your niece's death?"

"No, on the contrary, he loses all."

"Then no suspicion can attach to him."

"But may to me. Is that what I understand you to intimate?"

"I certainly have not meant to intimate anything of the kind, but I will not disguise your situation, sir."

"Do you suspect me of the crime?"

"I do not; I am merely searching after the truth, sir."

"And you have seen that I am only eager to help you all in my power. What can I tell you more, now?"

Before Billy could question further there came a ring at the bell, and a servant appeared to announce Mr. Horace Hurst, who had followed close behind her, and who exclaimed over her head:

"My God, Mr. Keeler, tell me it is not true! Tell me there is some mistake, that this face pictured in the newspapers is *not* the face of your niece—of my Alma! But, I read in your face the confirmation of my worst fears—Ah, your pardon; I thought you were alone."

CHAPTER IV.

SHOWS EDWIN KEELER'S HAND.

THE man had spoken with great rapidity of utterance, pushing the servant aside and stepping into the room while speaking.

It was not until then, when he stepped in, that he noticed a stranger was present, and he made haste to ask pardon for his abrupt manner of entering.

"Don't mention it, Horace, don't mention it," Mr. Keeler waived. "Anything is excusable at a time like this. It is only too true. Our Alma has been cruelly murdered."

"And this gentleman—"

"Mr. Weston, a detective. Weston, Mr. Hurst."

The new-comer offered his hand to Billy, but spoke again to Mr. Keeler.

"Then you have already been to the police?"

"Yes, yes."

"I am glad of that. I intended going myself, as soon as I found it was really true—though there was scarce room for doubt."

Broadway Billy had taken the man's hand when offered, in a casual way, and Hurst had now flung himself down on a chair, his face wearing an expression of heavy affliction.

"What time was it, sir, when Miss Keeler left you last night?" Billy put a sharp question to him.

"When Miss Keeler left *me*?" in greatest surprise. "I did not see her last night. What do you mean by such a question as that?"

"She left a note for her uncle, on going out, saying she was going to see you and telling him not to feel anxious if she did not return early. Mr. Keeler suspected a marriage."

"Good heavens!" Hurst cried, turning to Mr. Keeler. "What does this mean? I had no appointment whatever with Alma. If she left such a note she intended visiting me without my knowledge. I was at home all the evening, and she certainly did not carry out her intention."

"This makes the matter more puzzling than ever," mused Broadway Billy. "We hoped you would be able to throw some light upon her movements."

"But I can not; I am all in the dark."

"It is strange."

"What do you make of it all, sir? Have you no clue to the mystery? Have you no theory to advance?"

"Do you think she can have been lured from the house in your name?"

"Who would have done such a thing as that?"

"Had you a rival?"

"No."

"Mr. Keeler, did you preserve that note she left?"

"Unfortunately I did not; I had no idea it would be important, and threw it in the fire."

"You recognized the writing as that of your niece?"

"Oh, yes, it was her hand."

"What can it mean?"

Hurst could not remain seated, and sprung up and paced the floor.

Broadway Billy had been watching him narrowly, but could find nothing amiss in his words or actions. All seemed natural.

"Mr. Hurst," he asked, "have you any suspicion?"

"Not the slightest, sir."

"You are not aware that the young lady had an enemy?"

"If she had I never knew it. And there was no one to benefit by her death, either, so far—"

But there he stopped short and looked at Mr. Keeler.

"Speak right out," Mr. Keeler took it up.

"The thought that has come to you is that I

am the next of kin after the poor child, and that I will come in for the estate."

"Yes, that was my thought, Mr. Keeler; but, don't imagine that a suspicion followed it."

"I believe you. But, the fact remains."

Then followed a long talk, during which Broadway Billy tried to get some light upon the mystery, but without avail.

It was dark when he and Hurst took their leave of Mr. Keeler and left the house together.

No sooner had they gone than Mr. Keeler rose and paced the floor.

His whole manner was changed.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself, in hoarse whisper. "Where can Alma Keeler be, if this is not she, and it certainly is *not*. But, far be it from me to admit that, with the Keeler estate almost in my grasp. Confound that young detective! he is too sharp by half. How could he tell this young woman had been left-handed?"

He struck himself on the forehead, as if to quicken his ideas.

"And since it certainly is not Alma Keeler, who is it? There is only one other person in the world it can be—that base brat of mine. By heavens! but it is a mystery. I must see Rachel Neilson as soon as possible, and find out— But, no, that will never do; great heavens, no! I have gone too far now to think of retreating, and must still insist that the murdered girl was Alma Keeler."

He struck himself again, as if he would now knock his thoughts into something like order.

"Rachel Neilson may know something about it," he mused, "but I must not show my hand in the game. Alma and Edma looked enough alike to have been twin sisters, but there was still a difference, and the moment that accursed young detective asked me if my niece was left-handed, I saw the mistake. How could he know that, and the girl dead? Edma was left-handed, certainly. But, curse him, I have closed his eye, and now my business is to bury my niece properly, push the police investigation and eventually come into the property."

He was still pacing the floor, but now silent, when there came a timid knock at the door, and he stopped and bade the applicant enter.

His face had instantly reassumed its sorrowful expression.

"Oh! it is only you, Jane?" he said, as the door opened and a servant entered.

"Well, what is it?"

"Something I had forgot to tell you, sir," was the respectful response. "It may be useful to the police, sir. It may help us to find out who killed the poor, dear child."

"Let me hear it, by all means, Jane. Nothing must be left undone that promises any hope."

"You know I told you Alma spoke to me when she went out."

"Yes, I remember, Jane."

"She told me not to mention to you that she was out, unless you asked for her, and not to feel alarmed if she did not come in early; and that I should not wait up, for her, and should any one call I was to say that she was out—which was all I could say."

"Yes, yes; you have told me all this before."

"But not this part of it, sir: An hour after that it was, maybe, that some one did call; a slight and slender young man, who asked for Miss Keeler, and when I told him she was out he was very urgent to know when she would be in, but of course I could not tell him."

"Well, what of all this, Jane? Do you know who the young man was?"

"No, I didn't know him from Adam, and maybe couldn't pick him out if he was before me this minute; but, before I went to bed I looked out, feeling anxious about

Alma, and there was the young man yet, walking up and down, and on the other side of the street, only a little further away, was a cab—a four-wheeler, worked with a white horse, sir."

"And is that all, Jane?"

"Yes, that is all, sir."

"And you don't know whether the cab belonged to the young man or not?"

"No; but the thought has come to me that maybe it did, sir, and that he waited there till Alma came home, when he carried her off and killed her. I don't know as it's so, but that thought has come to me, since you found out by the paper she was murdered."

"There may be something in your idea, Jane, and you had better tell the officers about it when they come to-morrow. We must help them all we can toward solving the great mystery, for the death of that poor child must be avenged. But, have you prepared the room for the body, as I told you? The undertaker will no doubt be here with the remains this evening."

The woman made answer, and soon went out, when a look of satisfaction appeared on Edwin Keeler's face and he rubbed his hands together as if everything was moving to suit his pleasure. And so he thought, too, even though puzzled on one point; but he made the grand mistake of underrating the ability of Broadway Billy, the New York Special.

CHAPTER V.

A SCHEME WITHIN A SCHEME.

In an old house on a certain street in Hoxton, north of City Road and east of Shepherdess Walk, a woman was nervously and excitedly pacing the floor.

It was on this same evening of the events of the preceding chapter, and she held in her hand a copy of the second edition of the *Times*, which, like the *Evening Standard*, contained a likeness of the victim of the mysterious murder.

She had been walking the floor for an hour or longer, during which time her nervousness and excitement had continually increased. She had read several times every word the paper had to say about the murder mystery, and a thousand times had she looked intently at the sketched likeness.

"My God! will he never come?" we find her saying to herself, and she crushes the paper in her hand as she speaks. "I cannot bear this uncertainty much longer."

Presently a man's step sounds on the stairs, and the woman sprang to the door and threw it open.

"Have you seen the body?" she demanded eagerly. "Is it Edma?"

"It is not Edma, be sure of that."

"Thank God!"

The man had now entered the room, and the woman closed the door. He was a young man, passably well dressed and not bad-looking.

He helped himself to a chair, and the woman sat down with a sigh and a look of great relief.

"I did not see the body myself," the young man went on to say, "for the undertaker has taken charge of it; but, it has been identified positively as that of Alma Keeler."

"Yes, yes, I knew it must be, if not Edma," the woman said, excitedly. "And, listen to me, Jeffrey Shears," catching his arm with a nervous clutch: "You love Edma, I am sure you do, and if you love her you must save her. Do you understand me? I say you must save her!"

"You know well enough that I love her," the young man answered, wonderingly. "But, I do not know what you mean by saving her. Where is she? What has happened to her, that I can save her?"

"She is in hiding, somewhere, I know not where, Jeffrey. It was not her intention to kill Alma Keeler, but something has—"

"Heavens! you do not accuse your daughter?"

"Listen, listen to me, Jeffrey Shears. You say you love her—I know you do, and if you truly love her you will save her, no matter what she has done. Promise me that you will save her if you can."

"Yes, I promise you that; but, you are talking in riddles. It is true that I love her, even though she despises me, and if she is in danger I will save her if I can. But, surely she has not done this deed. What can you be thinking about, to imagine such a thing?"

"She had no intention of doing it, Jeffrey, believe me. Only save her, and I will use all my influence with her to induce her to marry you."

"It is a bargain! I'll save her, no matter what the cost."

"Good, good."

"But, how am I to save her, and from what?"

"You must save her from the detectives, from the police, from whom she is now in hiding."

"I will do it, Mrs. Neilson. I will do it at any cost, and then perhaps she will deign to notice me and with your help I may yet win her. But, why should she kill Alma Keeler?"

"Alas! I do not know. Something unforeseen must have happened. Maybe she did it in self-defense."

"But, she had some design against Alma; what was it?"

"To tell you that I must tell you a secret which will perhaps cause you to despise my child."

"Perhaps the secret is one which I have already discovered, and if so, you need have no fear of that; I love Edma for herself alone, not for her name."

"Ha! how came you to know?"

"I investigated and found out. I know that your name has always been Neilson, I cannot find that you have ever been married, and the daughter simply bears her mother's name."

The woman's face flushed as she listened. "I will make no attempt to deny it," she said, quietly. "And, since you know this much you may as well know everything. In fact, it is necessary you should know, for you must be armed for the work you have undertaken. If my child bore her father's name, it would be Keeler."

"Ha! then she is really half-sister to Alma? That accounts for their looking so much alike."

"No, no, not that; Edma is the child of Edwin Keeler—curse him!"

"Then how do you account for their similarity?"

"I can't account for it."

"But, what has this to do with the murder? Or, what design had Edma against Alma, if she did not intend to kill her?"

"Can you not see?"

"I am not trying to guess it."

"Then I will tell you, briefly. You must know how I hate the Keelers, since Edwin did not keep his word with me. I have watched my child and Henry Keeler's grow up, and have often wondered at their looking so much alike. I saw Alma growing up to inherit the Keeler riches, while my child had not even a name. I hated the other, and at last made up my mind that, for revenge, I would somehow remove her and put Edma in her place."

"A clever scheme, by Judas!"

"With that object in view, I schooled Edma for the part she must one day play, and at last the time for action came. Yesterday afternoon Edma left me and set forth to carry out our scheme and install herself in Alma's place. It was her intention to lure Alma from home, take her to a certain place, and there force an exchange of clothes with her, when she, Edma, would return to the

Keeler residence and take up her abode there. Every contingency had been provided for, we thought, but it is plain now that something miscarried, with this terrible result."

Jeffrey Shears remained thoughtful.

"What place had you arranged to take Alma to?" he presently asked.

"I do not know that."

"Do not know! That is strange. That was the most important part of the work you had undertaken."

"I trusted it all to Edma. She knew of a person and a place, she told me, and if I would not question her, she would attend to that part of it alone; so, I gave it into her hands entirely."

"That is awkward, mighty."

"How? Why?"

"I was only thinking of the possibility of a mistake, that was all; but, Edwin Keeler has identified the body beyond any chance of doubt. And even so, that could not make any difference to you, while it might make all the difference in the world to Mr. Keeler. If Edma were the victim— No, no, there is no doubt about its being Alma. I was merely supposing. If it were Edma, there would be the danger that Alma would turn up again— Ha! here is the very thought, Rachel Neilson!"

"What is it?"

"The victim was Edma."

"My God! and you told me—"

"Do you not see the scheme? Events have played right into your hands. We must find Edma, and she must at once assume the role as Alma Keeler. You must go to the police and declare that the victim of the murder was your child, Edma. You must go to Keeler and demand the body of your child—you must fight for it, if need be. Your revenge against Keeler will be sweet, and you will put your child in Alma Keeler's place. As it is now, she is out forever, unless some such scheme is worked, and this is the only chance. What do you say to it? Will you do it? I will help you!"

The woman was pale, and her lips were pressed tight.

"You see it is your only hope," Jeffrey Shears urged. "If Edma has killed Alma, here is her chance to escape suspicion. Edma Neilson dead, is out of the way of Alma Keeler living. You will mourn for her, but under your mourning you will laugh in your sleeve to think of your child in possession of the Keeler name and fortune. Edma, well knowing what happened to Alma, can invent a story that will carry her through, and even if Keeler suspects he will not dare to push the investigation too hard, for it would appear that he was anxious to prove his niece dead in order to come into the estate himself. It is excellent! Put on your things and we will go to the police without a moment's delay."

Jeffrey Shears was a fellow of quick thought and strong impulse, and he easily overcame the slight objections the woman raised and carried his point. Here was the beginning of perplexing complications.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUESTION FOR A SOLOMON TO DECIDE.

"COME, my famous young Lecoq, put on your hat and come with me. We have our hands full, now, or are likely to have, before this day closes."

The following morning, Sergeant Cliff was again at Broadway Billy's lodging, more urgent than before, if possible; greeting Billy in the words quoted as soon as the door was opened.

"Have you picked up a clue?" Billy inquired.

"We have more clues than we can make use of. The case has taken a new turn, and is about the most complicated affair I ever took hold of."

"A surfeit of clues, eh? That can do no

harm. The more the merrier. But, what is in the wind? You can reel it off to me while I am getting ready. I'm lazy this morning."

"You were up late?"

"Yes."

"What doing?"

"Shadowing Horace Hurst."

"The deuce! I did not find him at all."

"So I am aware. He is innocent of any share in the crime."

This was the first time the two detectives had seen each other since the previous afternoon.

"You think him innocent, eh?" Cliff reflected. "Well, so do I, for I do not think we will have far to go now to get the right man."

"Who do you suspect it is?"

"Keeler."

"What leads you to suspect him?"

"He comes in for the property, and it is a large estate."

"There is a motive, certainly; but, if guilty, he is a remarkable actor, that's all."

"You are ready?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then, and I'll tell you my story in the hansom."

"Where are you bound for now?"

"Keeler's."

They were soon in the cab and rattling away.

"The matter is greatly complicated," Sergeant Cliff proceeded as soon as they had started. "Last night a man and a woman came to the Yard for the purpose of claiming the body. I was not there, but have got it straight."

"That does complicate matters, I should say."

"You will see that it does. This woman's name is Rachel Neilson, and she is positive that the dead girl must be her daughter, Edma Neilson. She gave her name as 'Mrs.,' but we have quickly found out that her daughter was an illegitimate. The man with her was the girl's lover, one Jeffrey Shears."

"And they saw the body and positively identified it?"

"That is the best part of it. The undertakers had the body, preparing it for taking it to Keeler's residence, and they did not get to see it. The inspector told them to call at Keeler's at nine o'clock sharp this morning, when the body would be there, and—so will we."

"Good!"

"So I say—good!"

They reached their destination at a quarter to nine.

There was no other cab in the street, and they had reason to believe the woman and man had not yet come.

Dismissing their hansom, they asked to see Mr. Keeler, who greeted them tearfully when they entered the room where he was. They had caught sight of a pall in the front room.

"Have you learned anything?" Mr. Keeler was quick to ask. "Have you any clue to the foul assassin?"

"We have not, yet," Cliff made answer. "There is unusual absence of motive in the matter. You yourself are the only one to gain anything by this death."

"And I really gain nothing that I did not possess before," said the suspected man, calmly. "My niece loved me as much as if I had been her father, and really insisted that the estate would be as much mine as hers."

"Then you had talked about it?"

"It had been mentioned between us; business in connection with it brought it up occasionally."

"And you have discovered nothing new yourself?" Cliff asked, to drop that subject.

"You have no clue to give us? No bit of information that may be useful?"

"Ah! that reminds me."

"What?"

"Of what my servant, Jane, told me last night."

The servant was called, and Mr. Keeler required her to repeat what she had told him the night before.

Sergeant Cliff and Broadway Billy listened attentively to her story, and at mention of the four-wheeler and the white horse the two detectives exchanged a meaning glance.

The woman had barely finished telling what she had to tell, when callers were announced.

Mr. Keeler was seen to start, at mention of their names.

"Show them in here," he directed.

Sergeant Cliff and Broadway Billy rose, the sergeant saying:

"We will withdraw, sir, until your callers go, unless—"

"You may remain," Mr. Keeler interrupted. "It can be nothing private."

The next moment a woman entered, a woman about forty years of age, followed by a man some years younger.

"Mr. Keeler," the woman spoke with rapid utterance, "there is some terrible mistake. I called at the police office last night, to claim the body of my child, having recognized the likeness in the newspapers, and was told that you had identified the body as that of your niece."

"There must be some terrible mistake, indeed, on your part," responded Keeler, firmly. "There certainly is no mistake about the body we have had brought here. Would to God it were possible—not that I could put the sorrow from my shoulders to yours, but that my niece might be restored to me alive. No, there is no mistake; the body is that of Alma Keeler."

"I must see the body, sir."

"You certainly may. It is in the front parlor."

Mr. Keeler made a motion to the servant, and she led the way into the room where the coffin was.

"Open the window, Jane," Mr. Keeler directed. "Give the lady plenty of light, so that she may be fully satisfied. You have no cause for weeping here, madam."

This was spoken tenderly and sorrowfully, and the two detectives could hardly doubt Mr. Keeler's sincerity.

The window was opened, so that the light fell upon the casket, and the servant reverently lifted the pall and drew back the slide from over the glass that covered the dead face.

As soon as she stepped away the other woman advanced, and the moment her eyes rested upon the dead girl's face she uttered a piercing scream.

"Oh! It is my child, it is my child!" she cried.

Her companion looked quickly, and his face turned instantly a deathly hue.

"Speak!" the woman demanded, turning upon him. "Is it not my child? Is it not Edma Neilson?"

"It is, most positively," the young man declared.

The woman threw herself upon the coffin, sobbing bitterly, and Mr. Keeler had a puzzled look upon his face.

"This is pitiable, pitiable," he spoke, in whisper to Sergeant Cliff. "She is positively mistaken, and yet she seems thoroughly convinced that this is her daughter. What is to be done?"

"She must prove her claim," Cliff answered. "Wait a moment till her outburst of grief subsides."

"But how can she do that? It will be simply impossible."

"Wait, and we'll see."

Gradually the first outburst spent itself,

and presently the woman looked again at the dead face, this time and earnestly.

"My child, my Edma, my own," she moaned. "I am not mistaken; it is only too true, too terribly true. The mistake is on your part, Mr. Keeler; this body belongs to me, for it is that of my daughter. You must give it up to me. Oh! Edma! if you could only speak and tell who did this fearful deed!"

CHAPTER VII.

POSITIVE PROOFS OF IDENTITY.

BROADWAY BILLY now stepped to the front, giving Sergeant Cliff a signal to follow his lead.

"Madam," he asked, "are you quite sure this is the body of your daughter? It has been positively identified by Mr. Keeler as that of his niece."

"Am I quite sure? Good heavens! do you think I do not know my own child? I know it is Edma Neilson's body, sir. Here is Mr. Jeffrey Shears, who was my daughter's lover; ask him."

"Is this the body of Edma Neilson, sir?" Billy demanded.

"It is, sir," was the positive answer.

"And I declare it is *not*!" exclaimed Mr. Keeler. "Do you suppose that I can be mistaken? Was not my niece missing all night and all day, and did I not recognize her face the moment I saw it in the evening newspaper? Madam, you are wrong; ask my old servant here."

He indicated the woman Jane.

"What do you say, woman?" asked Broadway Billy.

"I was sure it was Miss Alma, sir," was the respectful response.

"And here is Mr. Shears, who is as sure it is my daughter Edma," cried the woman.

"Madam, can you prove that this is the body of your daughter?" Broadway Billy inquired. "It is plain that one or the other is mistaken here."

"Have I not proved it already? Are not my breaking heart any my tears proof enough? Can you not take the word of Mr. Shears? My daughter was missing from home, and the moment my eyes fell upon this face in the newspapers I recognized her, and I sent Mr. Shears in haste to the morgue, to make doubly sure."

"Ha! she had some doubt!" cried Mr. Keeler. "I had none. She sent to the dead-house to see if it was her child; I went direct to the police to claim the body. I leave it to you, gentlemen of the police, to say which has the strongest claim."

"My good woman," said Broadway Billy, turning to Mr. Keeler's servant, "was Miss Keeler accustomed to doing sewing?"

"She did a little, but a very little, sir."

The other woman attempted to speak, but Billy bade her be silent for a moment.

"Mr. Keeler," he said, turning then to him, "you have told us that your niece was not left-handed, I believe."

"She was not, sir."

"Very well. Now, madam," to the other claimant, "was your daughter a sewing-girl? and was she left-handed? Take care how you answer."

"I take care only for the truth, sir. My daughter was a dressmaker's assistant, and she was left-handed."

"Very well. Now, had she any mark upon her person by which you can prove to us that this is her body? Think well, now; if you are her mother you ought to know."

"Yes, yes," the woman said, excitedly. "On the left side of her head, near the top, you will find a scar on the scalp, about an inch long, where she was cut when she was nine years old."

Billy turned to Mr. Keeler.

"Mr. Keeler," he said, "I had a doubt about this being the body of your niece, when you told me your niece was not left-

handed. I know this young woman was left-handed, because marks upon her fingers prove that she was accustomed to sewing with her left hand, and not with the right. Here is proof enough, in itself."

Mr. Keeler looked choleric, while he said, mournfully:

"I cannot understand it, I cannot understand it. If this is not the body of my niece, where can she be?"

"That remains to be seen, sir. Now, madam, for the final proof. We will look for the scar on the scalp, and if it is there, your claim will be clear. Mr. Cliff, will you assist me?"

Sergeant Cliff had been looking on and listening with admiration, and he now lent a hand.

The headpiece of the coffin was removed, and the murdered girl's head was lifted a little and her hair parted in search for the scar.

And the scar was found, a white seam about an inch long, just as the mother had described it, and Mr. Keeler and the others were called to look at it. The woman had proved her claim.

As if there had been a lingering doubt in her mind, the mother now threw herself again upon the coffin, weeping bitterly.

"I can't understand it, I can't understand it," Mr. Keeler was saying, as he paced up and down the room excitedly. "Where is my niece? You men of the police, you must find her for me."

"We will endeavor to do so, sir," promised Cliff.

"You, young man," turning upon Billy, "since you were so astute in proving this mistake on my part, see if you cannot be just as cunning in finding my niece and restoring her to me. Whatever I have said derogatory to your ability, I take it all back now."

"Thank you," said Billy, quietly.

Sergeant Cliff and the young man who had come with the Neilson woman, removed her gently from the coffin, and Billy closed it again.

"Where do you live, madam?" Sergeant Cliff inquired.

The young man gave the address.

"And do you want the body sent there?"

"Yes," the woman sobbed.

"It shall be done immediately."

The woman suddenly raised herself up, dashing away her tears and looking around, and seeing Broadway Billy, sprung to him, grasping his right hand in both of hers and falling upon her knees at his feet.

"Oh! sir!" she cried, with great earnestness, "I want you to do something more for me. You have given me the body of my child, and now I want you to find her murderer. He must not—he shall not escape! You must move heaven and earth, if necessary, but you must bring him to account."

"I will do it, madam, if possible. If you will allow me, I will go home with you for I want to talk with you about the matter."

"Yes, yes," eagerly, "pray do that."

Billy drew Cliff aside for moment and they held a brief whispered consultation.

That ended, Billy left the house in company with the Neilson woman and her companion, going away with them in their cab—a four-wheeler.

"I wanted to ask you some questions about this mystery," Billy spoke, as soon as the cab started. "Have you any suspicion who killed your daughter, madam?"

"I have not, sir, the slightest."

"Can you furnish any clew?"

"None whatever."

"Will you explain why your daughter and Alma Keeler looked so much alike that this complication should come out of it?"

"I prefer not to disclose that, sir."

"Were they sisters?"

"No."

"In order to handle this matter intelligent-

ly, madam, I ought to be in possession of all the facts you can furnish."

"This is something I prefer not to disclose, for a very personal reason. I hope you will not press me, sir. It certainly can have had nothing to do with the murder."

"You have implored me to hunt the murderer down."

"Yes, yes; he must be found and made to suffer for the terrible crime."

"But if you hold anything back you are hindering me just that much. I must know everything."

"Then shame to the wind; I will tell you. This child of mine had Keeler blood in her veins. Edwin Keeler was her father. If possible, keep my secret, sir."

"Madam, if possible, I will. I noticed that you and Mr. Keeler met as strangers."

"Yes, and strangers we are, sir."

"Everything was settled between you, then? He had nothing to fear from you or your child?"

"Yes, everything was over between us. He lied to me, curse him! and refused to do me justice; but, he had nothing to fear from me, for I have not seen him in years and he was as if dead."

"But, you hate him."

"Yes, I hate him, hate him. How can it be otherwise?"

"Still, you cannot think that he had anything to do with such a terrible deed as has been done?"

"Oh, no, no; I cannot accuse him of that. Still, if it had been his niece instead of my child I might have suspected him, for by her death he would come into all the Keeler estate."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHO KILLED EDMA NEILSON?

As the woman said this, Broadway Billy noticed something.

He noticed that her companion, Jeffrey Shears, gave her a sly nudge with his leg, as they sat side by side.

Billy did not allow it to be seen that he had observed this, but it set him to thinking. Why should Jeffrey Shears want to caution her just at that point? It was for him to learn.

"Well, his niece is missing, it seems," Billy reminded.

"Yes, that is so, according to the story he has told. It is a very strange matter, sir."

"Very strange indeed. What do you know about it, Mr. Shears?"

Billy turned suddenly to him.

"I know nothing about it," was the prompt response.

"You were Miss Neilson's lover."

"That is true."

"Had you a rival?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"And you have no idea who can have killed the young lady?"

"Not the slightest idea, sir. It is the greatest mystery I ever met with in my life."

Billy questioned on, the whole distance to their destination, but what he gained amounted to very little. It was plain that neither the mother nor the lover could solve the riddle.

On arriving at their destination Billy took leave of them there, and engaged the cabman to take him back again to Mr. Keeler's residence.

The woman and her companion entered the house together, sorrowfully.

It was their first chance to speak out.

"My God! who can have done it?" cried the mother, throwing herself upon a chair, weeping afresh. "Who can have done it?"

"That is what I want to know," muttered Shears, bitterly, as he paced the floor. "Who would have imagined that this terrible surprise was in store for us? It almost floored me."

"It almost killed me," the mother moaned. "To think, that we went there with the intention of proving Alma Keeler's body to be Edma's, only to find that it was my Edma's in truth. My God! I shall go wild! What is all this mystery, Jeffrey? Who was it killed my child, and why?"

"Can it have been Edwin Keeler?"

"Do you think so? I noticed that you gave me a poke, in the cab, when I mentioned his name. Why did you do that?"

"To caution you. I thought we had better talk it over together before we let out too much. And then, it is pretty dangerous to accuse a man of his standing of such a crime."

"But, why should he want to do it?"

"If he would do it at all, to get possession of the estate, of course."

"But, why should he kill Edma? She was not the heiress. He had nothing to gain from her."

"Can you not see? Suppose Edma carried out her design, and removed Alma, and Mr. Keeler mistook her for Alma, whom he himself had already decided to remove."

"Great heavens! Do you think that can be the explanation of it?"

"It might be, but we dare not say so."

"That is true."

The woman was thoughtful for some moments; then she sprung suddenly to her feet, exclaiming:

"Jeffrey Shears, my child—my Edma is dead; do you understand me? She is dead; has been cruelly murdered! I must have revenge for the crime that has been done, and if Edwin Keeler killed her he shall die!"

"But, you must go slow, very slow. We have no proofs against him, you must understand; and, he may be entirely innocent. If he is guilty, the detectives will find him out fast enough; he cannot hope to fool Scotland Yard. Besides, you gave that young detective the cue."

"Yes, that is so; I had already forgotten. But we must not be idle, for the mystery must be cleared up. The one who slew my child shall perish by my hand. I swear it!"

There was something terrible in the woman's manner as she registered this vow.

"And the expense of the funeral, have you means?"

"I have barely sufficient."

"Then you certainly cannot bear the expense in the style Mr. Keeler has begun. I am willing to help you, but I doubt whether I can raise sufficient ready money at once—"

"Edwin Keeler shall assist," interrupted the woman, speaking with determination. "It is his child and mine, and it seems as if Providence has ordered it this way on purpose. Will you go and see him for me? You may be able to learn something more at the same time."

"Yes, I will go."

In the mean time, when Broadway Billy and the others had gone from the room in which the dead girl lay, Mr. Keeler turned immediately to Sergeant Cliff.

"Now," he asked, "what is going to be done? This confusion has almost bewildered me. Where is my niece, since it has been shown plainly that this cannot be she? What do you make of it all?"

"We must find her, sir."

"But, you have no clue."

"On the contrary, we have a clue, now."

"What is that?"

"The story your servant here told us a little while ago. We must find that four-wheeler and white horse."

"Why do you attach importance to that?"

"Because my young colleague, on the morning when the crime was discovered, detected that the body had been brought to the place where it was found, and that in a four-wheeler drawn by a white horse."

"Impossible!"

"Not by any means, sir; he proved it to my satisfaction."

"That young man is in league with the devil, then. He even knew at sight that this girl had been left-handed."

"Not quite so bad as you assert, sir, but he certainly is going to be a prince of detectives, if he keeps on. We already call him the London Lecoq."

"Then what Jane saw confirmed his theory, and you have a clue. It follows, then, that the girl was taken from the street, murdered, and finally left at the place where the body was found."

"You grasp the idea, sir."

"But that is all I can grasp; my mind staggers under the effort to comprehend it."

"Well, dropping that, will you explain how it is that this young woman and your niece looked so very much alike that you could not doubt but this was your niece?"

"I cannot explain it, sir; I lay it to chance."

"Do you know the woman?"

"I do not."

"She called you by name."

"Which she had learned, of course."

"But, I noticed that you started when your servant mentioned her name to you, on her arrival."

"Confound it, is there anything in the world that you detectives don't notice when you are on the scent? I see there is no use denying it: you will get at it anyhow."

"Well?"

"I do know that woman. Her name is Neilson, as she gave it. I meant to hold this back, more for her sake than my own, and even in telling you I don't want it made public. If this young woman is her child, I suppose she was also mine; which may account for the likeness."

"Hum!"

The detective was thoughtful.

"You see," Mr. Keeler continued, "I have held nothing back. I want the matter cleared up just the same as if no mistake had occurred, but I am more anxious to learn what has become of my niece and have her restored to me. Leave no stone unturned toward that end, sir, and if money is needed do not fail to come to me immediately. We must get down to the bottom of this matter."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOUR-WHEELER AND WHITE HORSE.

WHEN Sergeant Cliff left the house he had on his thinking-cap, and was in a brown study.

"I wonder if it is so," he asked himself. "I did not ask Keeler if the two girls were acquainted, for I did not want to direct his suspicions that way; he might seek to throw me off the track."

He caught his left wrist in his right hand behind his back, as was his wont when thinking hard, and walked with his head bent down.

"I half believe I may be right," he further communed. "The wicked work done with that knife looks as if it may have been done by a woman in a hot passion, hating her victim with all her heart and thus wreaking her spite against her in a frenzied manner."

His right hand closed upon his left wrist with a tight grip, and his pace slightly quickened.

"No, I must see the Neilson woman," he reflected. "Since her child was the victim, she would not shield the other a moment, and through her I may come to the truth. If Alma Keeler killed Edma, she must have got herself well besmeared with blood, and so she is in hiding, afraid of the consequences. It may be that Neilson is shielding her."

It was a point requiring some hard thinking, and that the sergeant gave it.

And it brought up other points which he found it impossible to answer, and some

thoughts which he found it difficult to reconcile with that theory.

Meanwhile Broadway Billy's thoughts were busy, too, as he was returning in the cab to the Keeler residence. He had many things to turn over in his mind, from his point of view, as he rode along.

The story told by Keeler's servant about the four-wheeler and the white horse was uppermost in his mind. It supported the theory he had been bold enough to advance to Sergeant Cliff upon such slight evidence, and he was gratified if nothing more.

He had been on the lookout for such a combination—a four-wheeler drawn by a white horse, ever since the morning of the discovery of the crime, but up to this time had not found it.

He laid this thought by on a shelf in his brain, and was thinking of another feature of the case, when suddenly a white horse caught his eye.

Looking quickly, he discovered that it was drawing a four-wheeler.

Billy signaled his driver immediately to stop, and as soon as he did so Billy got out, closed the door and climbed up beside him on the seat.

"Turn round," he ordered, "and follow that four-wheeler with the white horse. Do you know the driver? No? Well, no matter, keep him in sight. Did you notice whether the cab was empty or not?"

"Hi think it 'ad one hinside, sir."

These four-wheelers will carry four persons inside, and can accommodate another on the seat beside the driver.

A hansom, it may be mentioned in the same connection, is a two-wheeled vehicle calculated for two only, with the driver's seat behind so that he drives over the heads of his passengers.

The four-wheeler with the white horse went for a considerable distance before it stopped, but finally it set down a passenger, who paid his fare and dismissed the conveyance, upon seeing which Billy quickly said to his driver:

"Here, here's your fare and a tip besides. I want to take that other cab, now. Whip up and turn the corner there, where you can set me down."

The "tip" had been a liberal one, and the cabman obeyed promptly.

As soon as down, Billy reappeared at the corner, where he hailed the cab with the white horse just after it had passed.

"But where is it to, sir?" the driver demanded.

Billy had run forward and opened the door, and was getting in as if forgetting to give any directions.

The young New York ferret had an object in it, however. He wanted to see the inside of the cab, for it might tell him at a glance whether he was right or wrong.

And it did tell him, too. He almost gave voice to his favorite boyish ejaculation the instant he looked. The bottom of the cab had been recently scrubbed, and two or three suspicious dark spots were on the cushions.

"Drive to the Head Police Office, Scotland Yard," Billy stepped back to direct.

"Oh! all right, sir."

Billy got in and closed the door, and then examined the interior more closely, with care.

On the bottom was oilcloth, which had recently been scrubbed, as its brightness proved, to say nothing of a dirty strip close to the edge. But it was now quite dry.

The spots on the cushions, too, looked as if they had been wet, with the object of removing them; but these, too, were now quite dry, and the work, it was plain, must have been done some hours before, at least. Billy felt sure he had the right vehicle, if not the right man.

He had thought to test the man, by telling him to drive to Scotland Yard, for he reasoned that if guilty the man would be likely to show it; but, the fellow had taken

it all as a matter of course, and so Billy had a doubt. It might be that different drivers had the same rig on different days. It was something to have found the cab.

The vehicle rattled along all right, for awhile, but finally Billy noticed that it was going in a rather erratic manner, and about the time he noticed it the cab was brought up with a sudden jerk.

Billy opened the door and sprang out instantly, to learn what had happened.

At the horse's head was a man who had brought the animal to a stop, and that man was Sergeant Cliff.

"You!" the sergeant exclaimed, at sight of Billy.

"Where's the driver?" Billy demanded, looking eagerly around. "Have you allowed him to bolt?"

"No, but you have let him slip through your fingers. That's one against you, New York Special. You had no driver when I first sighted you, and the horse was making it a go-as-you-please."

Billy felt chagrined.

"He has given me the slip, that's certain," he admitted.

"Then it is plain that you have the right vehicle. Any proof of it inside?"

"Yes, plenty."

"To the Yard we go, then."

Both climbed up to the driver's seat, Cliff assuming the reins, and they continued on to the destination Billy had first named.

And as they rode along they compared notes.

"He was a clever fellow," Cliff continued, "and his running off in that manner is double proof that we have the right cab. It will be easy to find where the cab belongs, and there we may get on track of the man."

"But, he will probably be gone. I was an ass to give him a scare as I did. I expected he would show the white feather then and there, though."

"You can't calculate which way your cat is going to jump, my boy."

"I begin to learn that, now."

Cliff then went on to explain his new theory respecting the murder.

"You may be right," said Billy, "but I can't quite agree with you. It won't do for us both to think alike."

"Why not?"

"We couldn't argue, if we did."

"Well, what is your point of objection to my theory?"

"The one who employed this cab for such a purpose must have had some knowledge of the driver."

"Money will do anything, if you are careful to select your man."

"True enough; but, where was the motive?"

"I have yet to find it."

"And I do not think you will. I have not yet given up Edwin Keeler; the more I see of him the less I like his nose, Mr. Cliff."

"But, why would he kill Edma Neilson?"

"Maybe by mistake, and maybe purposely. I cannot say as to that."

"And why should he kill her purposely? She did not stand in his way with respect to the Keeler estate."

"No, maybe not, but perhaps her mother did."

"Ha! then you have got hold of that, too, eh? Well, it is a complicated affair, to say the least about it. We have made famous progress, though, better than I had any hope of making yesterday morning when we first took it up. Hello! here we are."

They had reached their destination, and what followed need not be set down.

CHAPTER X.

SCOTLAND YARD STUMPED.

SOME days passed.

Still Scotland Yard was baffled.

The mystery of the Whitechapel district was a mystery indeed.

Alma Keeler was yet missing, Edna Neilson had been buried, and London was hungry for the sequel.

The police had looked carefully into the doings of Edwin Keeler, of Horace Hurst, and of Jeffrey Shears, on that night, but each could give account of his whereabouts, with proofs.

It had been but a slight task to trace the four-wheeler with the white horse to its owner, where the driver's name was learned. His name was Enoch Peters, and he had been driving the cab on commission; the cab-owner demanded a certain sum per week, and what was over belonged to the driver.

But there the trail ended.

A constant watch was put on the cab-owner's office, night and day, but the cabman was not found.

Strictly speaking, Broadway Billy was the only one who had a clue, for he was the only one who had seen the cabman's face; but he, like the rest, had so far been unable to discover him.

At the mews where the cab was stabled it was learned that Peters, coming in at a very late hour on the night of the crime, had spent a considerable time in cleaning the inside of his cab, cursing roundly as he did so the drunken fare who had left such a "bloomin' mess" for him.

A very close examination of the spots on the cushions, however, and of the dirty line around the edge of the oilcloth on the floor, proved that the "mess" had been blood.

Hence it was quite certain that Broadway Billy had made no mistake in his first astonishing deductions.

Meanwhile, the New York Special was not idle.

He was eager to discover the cabby who had so neatly tricked him; but to that end it was not necessary for him to watch the stables, for the men of Scotland Yard were attending to that.

So, Billy divided his time among Edwin Keeler, Horace Hurst, Jeffrey Shears, and Rachel Neilson, at times visiting them openly, but oftener playing the shadow upon them when they least suspected. At the same time he had both eyes open for the wanted cabman, should chance throw him in his way.

He was satisfied of one thing, that Jeffrey Shears was entirely innocent of any share in the crime, so far as the murder of Edna Neilson was concerned. The same with the dead girl's mother. It was a mystery to them as to others. Nor could he get any evidence that they knew aught of the whereabouts of Alma Keeler. Jeffrey Shears paid a visit to Billy's lodging daily, eager for news.

In the same manner Edwin Keeler went daily to Scotland Yard, to learn whether any clue had been discovered that might lead to the finding of his niece, and he kept urging the officials not to relax their efforts in that direction while they were trying to find the murderer of the other girl. Nevertheless, a watch was kept upon his movements, for he had not been entirely cleared of suspicion himself. And it had been found, too, that Horace Hurst was quietly playing the detective upon him.

It was Broadway Billy who had made this discovery, and he had thus far kept it to himself.

One evening, when Billy was shadowing Keeler, who had gone out of the house upon some errand, he came suddenly upon Hurst, bent upon the same mission.

Billy accosted him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, in a friendly way.

"Just what you are doing yourself, I judge," was the answer. "I am watching Edwin Keeler."

"Then you do not hold him above sus-

picion, eh? But, you need not answer the question, for your shadowing him is proof for it."

"And it is plain that *you* suspect him, too. Mind, I cannot say a word, but I have made up my mind to learn what he knows. He appears innocent, but is he? He has an interest at stake."

"Yes, but it is to his advantage to produce his niece, if he can. If she remains 'missing' it will do him no good, so far as coming into the property is concerned; at any rate not for a long while to come. I think you can safely set it down, Mr. Hurst, that he is as much puzzled as any of us."

"Then why do you shadow him?"

"For one reason, to discover what he discovers. I am not satisfied that he is altogether innocent in the matter of Edna Neilson's death."

"You talk in riddles. I see no reason why he should desire the death of that young woman. There is a rumor that he bore most of the funeral expenses, having ordered beyond the means of Mrs. Neilson; but that was only generous."

He looked at Billy closely as he said this.

"Yes, it was a generous act," Billy agreed with him.

They held quite a lengthy conversation, while they waited for their suspect to reappear, and while they talked Billy made a discovery.

Two or three times he caught sight of a woman, some distance away, who appeared, to his mind, to be playing the spy upon him and Hurst, or upon one of them. He said nothing to Hurst, who did not see her.

Billy thought possibly Scotland Yard had made a change and set a woman to shadow Edwin Keeler, but that notion was dismissed as soon as he caught sight of the regular detective, so much more like a shadow than anything else, that it had required effort for Billy to sight him.

Finally Mr. Keeler reappeared, and started in the direction of his residence, and as he had visited a public office there was nothing very mysterious about his movements.

"No need for us to follow him further, Mr. Hurst," remarked Billy.

"Why do you think so?"

"See that shadow after him?"

Billy pointed out the detective.

"That's so. If Scotland Yard has him under surveillance there is no use for me to play the detective. I shall give it up and wait with what patience I can."

Billy lengthened out the talk, eager to learn more about the woman, whether she would follow Mr. Keeler or whether she was spying upon Mr. Hurst or upon himself. She certainly did not follow Keeler.

"Well, which way do you go?" Billy finally asked.

Hurst named his intended direction, and Billy had his cue.

"We'll part here, then," he said, "for I go the other way. Good-night."

Hurst responded, and Billy moved off at a rapid pace, but as soon as he turned a corner he stopped.

Looking back, he saw Hurst going away in an opposite direction, and as Billy watched he saw the woman coming toward the man, and presently they met and stopped.

"Now if I could only make myself invisible," said Billy to himself. "Here is something important, I have no doubt, and I ought to hear what is said. Well, if it can't be done I can shadow the woman, anyhow."

Even as he said this, though, an idea came to him.

At the point where the man and woman stood was a stone wall about as high as a man's shoulder, inclosing the grounds of a pretentious house. If he could only get over that wall unseen, he could move along to the point where they stood, and thus he might be able to overhear.

His mind approved of the scheme immediately, and he cast quickly about for a plan. Not far away was one end of the stone wall, and the house next to that had an iron fence. If he entered the yard inclosed by the iron fence, he could no doubt find means to scale the wall and gain entrance into the other grounds. And with him thought meant action.

Billy's former gamin instinct was all alive in an instant, and he looked at the situation as he would have done when a boy. It seemed only yesterday that he was Broadway Billy the bootblack. The passing years had lost him nothing, but had gained him everything. He had now a man's head, a man's strong legs and arms, and a man's will, but his heart was as free and light as ever. In a few seconds he was in the yard of the iron fence.

A few strides brought him to the stone wall, which was lower here than on the street, and he hastily examined the top. It was, as he had feared, set with broken bottles imbedded in cement, a dangerous kind of wall to climb without great precaution.

He soon found a place where he could get over, however, and with as little loss of time as possible was in the adjoining grounds.

Running along close under the wall, then, he soon reached the desired point, stopping to listen when he thought he had gone far enough.

Hearing voices, he looked cautiously over, and there were Hurst and the woman, and it was now evident that she had been watching him.

CHAPTER XI.

BILLY STRIKES A DOUBLE CLUE.

THE spot where they stood was in shadow, and Billy could look over the wall, cautiously, without much danger of being detected.

It was early in the evening, and the street was by no means deserted, persons passing up and down not infrequently, and Hurst and his companion had drawn close to the wall to be out of the way.

"Yes, I have been following you," were the first words Billy caught, and they were spoken by the woman.

"And why have you been following me?" Hurst demanded.

"Because I have been slighted."

"Well, I have been busy."

"Are you busy now? Maybe you expected to meet some one here."

"Oh-ho! then it is a case of jealousy, eh, my pretty Flora? What has put that into your little head?"

"I have the right to be jealous if I want to, haven't I? You have promised me a good deal, and I mean to hold you to your promise if I can, Horace Hurst."

"Well, you are going about it in a poor way, my pet."

"How is that?"

"No man likes the idea of being followed by a woman."

"I didn't suppose you would like it, but I didn't care. I love you and love dares a good many things."

"Well, I'm not going to get angry with you this time, my dear, but do not let it happen again. Instead of being here to meet a rival of yours, I was watching a man. That was all."

"What man? the one you were talking with?"

"No; the one who came out of the office over there a few minutes ago."

"What was his name?"

"Really, you are inquisitive to-night, but I'll tell you. It was Mr. Edwin Keeler."

"Ha! he is the uncle of that young woman who was found murdered. I have read all about him in the papers;—and about you, too."

"Well, I don't deny it."

"Then you meant to marry that girl, really?"

"It is a man's business in life to marry, my dear Flora; his family expect it of him." "And then what would have become of me?"

"Pshaw! many a married man still clings to his first love, and really loves her a great deal better than the one society compels him to recognize. You would have been all right."

"I don't know about that."

"You would have been better off than now, for, with the Keeler fortune in my hands, I could have done the handsome by you."

"Well, I am glad the girl is dead, then, for I want you all to myself, Horace. If you cannot, or will not marry me, let me be your willing slave for life, but let me be your only love."

"But, it isn't known that the girl is dead, Flora."

"Ha! that is so; I get mixed up when I try to think of it all. Then suppose she is found, what then?"

"I will be expected to marry her. We are engaged, as you have learned by the newspapers, and society expects it of me. Besides, think of the fortune back of it, my dear?"

The young woman stood with bowed head, scraping the pavement with the toe of one of her shoes.

"But, you do not love her?" she asked.

"Not half as much as I love you, my darling Flora."

"But you do love her some. Do not try to deceive me, Horace."

"I love her enough to wed her for her fortune, if I can find her, and then I'll bestow a good share of it upon you."

"But, it will not last, Horace. Sooner or later you will be found out, and then you will have to throw me over for the sake of peace, and— Oh! I cannot bear the thought of it, for I love you so!"

"You stand in your own light, Flora. Suppose it came to that, would I desert the one I love most, do you think? I would have money then, and, if it became too warm for us, you and I could set sail for the States some fine morning and there would be an end of it."

"Oh! would you do that, really?"

"Why, certainly."

"But, that would not be fair to her, Horace. My own happiness would be under a cloud thinking of her misery."

"Pshaw! what a strange creature you are. What need that matter to you, so long as you were happy yourself? It is folly to talk that way."

"And suppose you had children, all your own—"

"No brats for me, thank you."

"Well, well, I do not know. You will promise me one thing?"

"What is it?"

"You can't marry the girl till she is found."

"That is a patent fact."

"And if she is found, promise me that you will not wed her till we have had another talk about it."

"Well, yes, I can promise you that, certainly. But I don't promise to alter my plans, with such a fortune almost within my grasp, and you mustn't expect it of me. You know I can be firm, Flora."

"Well, well, I will not ask you to promise that. But, has anything of the mystery been cleared up?"

"Not a thing."

"And you have no idea who killed that young woman?"

"Not the slightest, my pet. It will have to be booked as another Whitechapel mystery, I think."

"But, you were watching Mr. Keeler, you said. What do you suppose he had to

do with it? Anything? Why were you watching him?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you. He wants to get hold of that fortune himself, I fancy; he was opposed to my marrying the girl. He may have spirited her away, or something like that."

"I don't think so."

"No?"

"No, I don't. That wouldn't help his case any, would it?"

"What do you think about it, then? You generally have good ideas in your pretty head."

"Have you forgotten Clark Summerfield?"

"Ha! that may be just it. I had forgotten him, for the time. You think he has taken her off?"

"I think it may be so. He was madly in love with her, and finding her engaged to you, might have become desperate."

"And I told the detectives I had no rival. I did not think of Summerfield. I must correct that as soon as I see Mr. Weston again. He must have that clue."

"Who is Mr. Weston?"

"A young detective from New York."

"And was he the man you were talking with before I came up to you?"

"Yes, he was the one."

"They say he is very smart, and he must be, to know that the body was taken to that place in a four-wheeler worked with a white horse. And then he found the cab, too. But, he didn't get the caddy; that fellow was up to snuff."

"I see you have been reading the whole sensation. It is a question in my mind whether the newspapers assist justice or defeat its ends. London knows the whole story, and the police haven't a single clue to work upon that has not been published."

"That's so. But, do you think this fellow Weston is equal to the occasion?"

"I should hate to be the murderer, and have him on my track, that is all. I tell you there is fire in his eye, when you look into it."

"But, he can't expect to do much if he hasn't a clue, and if there is no clue, the murderer has little to fear, if he is careful. But, I think he will find Alma Keeler, now."

"I will give him a clue, and see what he can make of it. And, by the way, I will take care that this detective does not fall in with you, if I can."

Billy noticed that the young woman gave a start, at that, and her eyes were for a moment wildly dilated.

"Why?" she pantingly asked. "Why do you say that?"

"Because he's a deucedly handsome fellow, and I might lose you, that's all."

"Oh! you rascal!" the girl cried, giving him a playful slap. "You need not be afraid of that, loving you as I do. Come."

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER CLUE IN PROSPECT.

BROADWAY BILLY had new clues upon which to work.

He had discovered that Horace Hurst had a rival in the person of one Clark Summerfield, and that Alma Keeler had the same in this young woman Flora.

To be sure there was nothing, as yet, to connect either of them with the murder, but the facts Billy had learned gave him valuable information. It seemed that this young woman had not known she had a rival before the whole sensation was made public.

And if there was a Clark Summerfield in the game, he had thus far kept himself in the background, which added to the suspicion against him. The start the young woman had given, however, caused by the remark Hurst had made, had impressed Billy deeply, and he questioned whether she herself had not some good reason to fear suspicion on the part of the detectives.

As the young woman gave Hurst the playful slap mentioned, and said "Come," she thrust her arm under his and they walked away from the spot.

It was fortunate for Broadway Billy that they went in the direction of the iron fence, for had they gone in the opposite direction it would have been no pleasant task for him to have scaled the stone wall at that point, capped as it was with broken glass, as described.

He ran back along the inside of the wall the way he had come, to the point where he had climbed over the lower wall which separated the two grounds from each other, and it was but the work of a few moments to get out of the grounds and upon the street again.

The man and woman were but a little distance ahead of him, walking slowly, and he followed after them like the ferret he was.

They walked on and on, leisurely, evidently preferring walking to riding, and it seemed to Broadway Billy as if their destination would never be reached, but finally their stroll came to an end.

Billy had been unable to hear anything more, of course, but then it was quite likely that he had already heard everything of importance that was said between them; and such, in fact, was the case. They stopped at a quiet-looking house on a quiet street, and the woman opened the door with a latch-key.

They entered, and the door closed after them.

"So far so good," said Billy to himself. "I have found the nest, and I'll take care not to forget the place."

In order to be doubly sure on this point, he made a note of the street and number, and then paused to turn the case over in mind to decide what he should do next.

He must learn something about Clark Summerfield.

Thinking it quite probable that he would see nothing of either Hurst or the woman again that night, and having nothing further to gain by watching them anyhow, he went away and returned to his lodging.

There he found a letter awaiting him, which had recently been delivered by the postman.

It was directed in a woman's hand, apparently.

Billy paused to think for a moment before he broke the seal. How many persons knew his address?

It was known at Scotland Yard, and particularly to Sergeant Cliff. Then, too, it was known to Jeffrey Shears, who had visited him daily for news, and to Mrs. Neilson.

Then it was known to Keeler, and— But known to so many, it was an open secret, and there were a hundred ways by which any one might find it out, so he dropped the thought and opened the letter.

It was dated that day and ran as follows:

"MR. WESTON:—

"It may be of some advantage to you to know that there was a jealous woman in the case. Horace Hurst has a mistress, Flora Floyd, who lives at No. — M — street. Is it not possible that it was she who killed Edna Neilson, mistaking her for Alma Keeler? This may be a helpful clue.

"AMATEUR."

Billy sat and looked at the letter for some time, reading it over and over again, studying it, and thinking.

The clue he had picked up was, after all, known to another, it seemed, and who was that other? And what had been the object in putting it into his hands?

The letter was signed Amateur. Amateur—what? Intended, undoubtedly, to convey the meaning that the writer was an amateur detective. If so, who was she and what was her motive?

It was possible that it was a woman in

Flora Floyd's own walk in life, who had a spite to work out against her. The reading of the newspapers would put any one in possession of all the known facts, and with this as a guide such a person could have formed the idea.

But, speculation was idle; detectives deal with facts.

Putting the letter in his pocket, Billy left the lodging and took a hansom to the home of Mrs. Neilson.

"Do you bring me news?" the woman asked, immediately.

"I am sorry to say I do not," Billy answered. "But I have come to ask a question of you!"

"What is it?"

"Were your daughter and Alma Keeler acquainted?"

"Unless I am dreaming, sir, you have asked me that question before. But, they were not."

"I had forgotten, if so. Well, do you know anything about a person by the name of Clark Summerfield? Have you ever heard of him?"

"Never, sir; I do not know such a person."

This was not Billy's object; the questions were only to divert the woman's mind to something else. He wanted to learn whether it was this woman who had sent him the anonymous letter.

He talked with her for a time in a roundabout way, then suddenly asked:

"By the way, have you any writing paper? A thought has just come to me that I must make sure of by jotting down."

"I do not believe there is a bit in the house, sir; I have not had use for such a thing in Lord knows how long. But, wait, and I'll see. Maybe Edma had some in her boxes."

The mention of her daughter's name brought tears to her eyes, and she went to search for the required article.

She presently returned, with a few sheets of paper, old and wrinkled, which Billy made use of. It was plain that the message had not come from this house, and his first theory was strengthened.

Billy engaged her in talk of no moment, for a time, and then took his leave, making his next objective point the Keeler residence.

He asked for Mr. Keeler, and was shown to the little sitting room.

The hour was still by no means late.

"Have you discovered anything?" the man inquired at once.

"Yes, something, and I have come to you to find out what there is in it, and if you can help me any."

"Well?"

"I have found that Horace Hurst had a rival for the hand of your niece."

Mr. Keeler scowled, and Billy thought a look of disappointment came into his face when he heard this.

"That fellow?" he sniffed disdainfully. "Is he back again in London? He is a penniless cad, with no name and no blood in his veins, whom I ordered out a few years ago."

"Where did he go?"

"To the States, I was given to understand."

"And that settled the matter between him and your niece, do you think?"

"I have no reason to think otherwise. She cared more for Hurst, and engaged herself to him even against my will."

"Then it does not look likely that this man has had anything to do with the sudden disappearance of your niece. But, I have not yet named him to you, yet you appear to know well whom I mean."

"I take it for granted you mean a fellow calling himself Summerfield."

"Yes, that is it. You did not mention him when I asked Mr. Hurst if he had any rival."

"He wasn't a rival in any sense. Wasn't

worthy of mention. I thought of him, but dismissed the thought. No, no, he has had nothing to do with this matter, Mr. Weston."

"Can you tell me where I will be likely to fall in with him, supposing he has returned to London?"

"I can't sir; I know no more about the cad than you do."

"Then I'll bid you good-evening."

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY SIGHTS HIS PREY.

BROADWAY BILLY rose to take his leave but just at that moment a caller was announced.

"Mr. John Cliff to see you, sir," said the servant.

It was Sergeant Cliff.

"Show him right in here," Mr. Keeler directed. "He may have news for us," he added, turning to Billy.

"Perhaps he has," Billy agreed.

They waited a moment, and then the door opened again and Sergeant Cliff stepped into the room, hat in hand, his dull boots as silent as ever.

"Ha!" he ejaculated, at sight of Billy, "I thought I should find you somewhere around the circle. 'My business, sir,' to Mr. Keeler, 'was to ask if you had seen Mr. Weston to-night.'"

"Then you bring me no news?" Mr. Keeler cried. "You have not yet found my niece?"

"No, to both your questions, sir," the detective answered.

"I grow discouraged."

Mr. Keeler dropped his chin upon his breast in a despairing way, and Sergeant Cliff turned to Billy.

"I have something for you, though," he said. "If your business with Mr. Keeler is at an end—can you come with me in my cab?"

Billy was ready instantly.

They took leave of Mr. Keeler, and were soon rolling away in Cliff's hansom.

"What is the word?" Billy asked as soon as they were off.

"A man has inquired for you at the Yard, and wanted you sent to him at his hotel as soon as possible."

"Who is he?"

"Gives his name as Clark Summerfield."

"Ha!" Billy exclaimed. "Just the man I want to find, too."

"Then you have already learned something about him, it seems. Who and what is he?"

"He was formerly a rival to Horace Hurst for the hand of Alma Keeler, but has been out of sight for a couple of years or so, it seems."

"We read from his appearance that he has been to the States. He is dressed in American style, and uses American words and phrases, but his voice lacks the native American twang."

"What hotel is he at?"

"The Metropole."

"No cheap hostelry, that. He must have money."

His appearance indicates that he is well fixed. But, that is not the important point yet."

"What then?"

"He wants to see you about this mystery we are on."

So they talked while the hansom jostled on its way, and at the same time Billy's thoughts were working.

He felt not a little chagrined, that his clues should so soon be known to all, but it was in the nature of events and was not to be helped. He still held one card in reserve.

Arriving at their destination, Sergeant Cliff waited in the cab while Billy went in.

He found Summerfield in his room, expecting him.

Clark Summerfield was a fine-looking

young man of twenty-eight years, with a handsome mustache and a sun-bronzed skin. He was well-dressed, and a diamond sparkled on his scarf.

"I'm glad you have come, Mr. Weston," he greeted, offering his hand in a friendly way. "I'm glad you happen to be in London, for I heard enough about you in the States to convince me that if any living man can solve the mystery of Alma Keeler, you are the man."

They had taken seats while he was speaking.

"Then you know nothing about her whereabouts, it appears," Billy remarked. "I have been looking for you, sir, hoping that I might get some information out of you regarding the affair. You aspired to her hand a couple of years back, but were repulsed. It looked as if you might have abducted her to make sure of the prize, but it seems that theory goes up in smoke."

"It does most assuredly, sir. I have reason to believe I possessed her love, two years ago, but Edwin Keeler put his foot down and crushed it out—perhaps he did. Anyhow, he warned me not to show myself again, calling me a beggar without a name, and worse. I went away, leaving a note for Alma asking her to wait a little while, if she really cared for me, and I went to the States. I know I had name and blood, which I would be able to prove, and all I lacked was wealth."

"And you have managed to corral some of that, too."

"A good bunch of it, Broadway Billy. I struck out for the West, on landing, and fell into a series of golden adventures. I saved the life of a young prospector, in the Rockies, and he made me share a find he had just made. We got a clean fifty thousand dollars apiece out of that. Then, with my share, I made some ventures, all but two of which came out all right, and to-day I have a couple of hundred thousand dollars to my credit. And all this within two years. It seems like a dream, but it is a fact. And now I have come back to England to renew my suit."

"When did you get here?"

"The day before yesterday. You see, it is impossible that I can have had anything to do with these recent mysterious events. I heard the sensation talked of, and hearing Alma Keeler's name mentioned, bought the papers back to the date of the murder and read the whole story. That was how I learned you were here. I set out to investigate a little on my own account, but finding I could do nothing, it being out of my line, I went to Scotland Yard this evening and asked for you. Now, the business I have with you is this: I want you to find Alma Keeler for me, dead or alive, and at any expense. I'm the banker; you do the playing."

"Just what I'm trying to do, Mr. Summerfield. Your offer cannot increase my efforts in the least. But, I'm glad of one thing."

"What's that?"

"I won't have to spend any more time upon the false clue in your direction."

"That's so. But, you will keep me posted? And, by the way, give me your address, for I may want to communicate with you."

Summerfield, though an Englishman, had American business snap about him, and Broadway Billy's call was limited to a few minutes only, yet he went away with a full knowledge of Clark Summerfield's share in the business.

Returning to the hansom, he told his colleague the whole story, having no reason to withhold any part of it, and so Scotland Yard got the benefit of all he was able to disclose in this connection. There was nothing in it, and so one clue came to naught.

When Billy parted from Cliff he set out

for his lodging, but his night's adventures had only fairly begun.

He was making his way through one of the best-lighted and most populous thoroughfares of the city proper, when he unexpectedly caught sight of a face.

Faces were all around him, but this was a face in particular. It was one he had photographed upon his memory, and though not thinking about the man at the moment, the passing face did not escape his keen notice.

It was the face of the wanted cabman.

Billy did not start or stare, and did nothing to draw the man's attention to himself.

They passed each other in the crowd, but as soon as they were separated a few paces, Billy wheeled about and followed his man, determined not to lose him if in his power to prevent.

The fellow had on a cap with a long peak, which partly threw his face in the shade, and was differently dressed from what he had been when Billy saw him before, but it was the same man; Billy had taken too careful a look at his face to be mistaken. He was not mistaken.

It was Enoch Peters, and he was walking with something of a skulking air, as if afraid of being recognized.

Broadway Billy had learned something more about the man, which added to the weight of suspicion against him.

He had questioned nearly every man at the stables, and at last had found one who knew where Peter's lodging was.

Going there, Billy had found that the man had taken sudden leave, and not a hint of his whereabouts was to be had.

If any person knew about the crime, Enoch Peters was the man, and now the New York ferret had him well in hand, apparently.

Billy made sure his revolver was ready for business, that his handcuffs were handy, and drew a little nearer to his game as they went along.

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY BAGS HIS MAN.

BROADWAY BILLY'S first thought had been to arrest the man on the street, but he had quickly decided that would not do.

The chances of his getting away were too great, for in a moment the crowd would be so dense that escape would be easy unless Billy could hold him.

Then, to summon a constable had its objections, too. Billy was unknown, and while he was making the "bobby" understand what was required, the game would have time to get out of sight.

So, he came to the conclusion that his best and only course was to follow the fellow to his lair, and there tackle him, the best man to win. Besides, by following, he might get further proof, or further light upon the mystery.

Suddenly, while Billy was thinking, the man turned out of the crowd and into a narrow and dimly lighted by-street.

Billy was at the corner the next moment, but did not immediately follow.

He knew the man would look back; it was natural.

Sure enough he did, before he had taken a dozen steps in his new direction, but he saw nothing to awaken his suspicion, for Billy was on the opposite side of the flowing stream of humanity.

The next moment Billy shoved through the crowd, and entered the narrow street into which his suspect had turned, and although now some distance behind he still had him well in sight, and had little fear of losing him, exercising due precaution in his task.

And this he did, of course.

The result of his years of practice in New York came well into play now, and he was here a veritable shadow of the shadows.

There are parts in London where narrow lanes, courts and alleys wind about in a bewildering maze, and this was one of them, as the New York ferret speedily discovered.

He found he had to draw nearer to his man, to lessen the chances of losing him, and he did so with all care and caution.

Thus the game went on for some time, until the suspected man had penetrated a considerable distance into the labyrinth, when he turned suddenly toward a door over which a lantern was hanging.

The instant he stepped aside from a direct course, his follower leaped back into the shadow of a doorway, well knowing the habit of men to look back over the course traveled before leaving the street, and Mr. Peters was no exception to the rule in this respect.

He looked, but he saw nothing of Broadway

Billy, nor of any one to awaken suspicion in his mind.

This done, he entered the place.

Broadway Billy was at the door in a few seconds, and recognized a very humble inn whose sign proclaimed it the "Sheaf and Sickle."

In former times, before the coming of railroads, this humble house had been well patronized by farmers coming to town with the products of their toil, and hence its agricultural appellation.

Billy made some disguising changes in his appearance, and went in.

The bar-room was on a level with the street, and the moment he opened the door he was in an atmosphere blue with smoke.

Near the front was a substantial, old-fashioned bar, with a barmaid in attendance, while arranged around the room were little tables at which men were sitting, drinking and conversing.

Billy sighted his man immediately.

He did not appear to notice him, but sauntered into the room lazily, as much a Britisher as the native born.

Peters had a table all to himself, which had been vacated a moment before he came in, and naturally Billy sat down by that one, since it was the one the least occupied.

He did not look at Peters, and a barmaid stepping up for his order, he asked for a "mug o' arf-an'-arf," which, by the way, he had no thought of drinking when it was brought; and Peters, who had only just sat down, ordered the same, and at that Billy said:

"You couldn't 'a' made ha better 'it, mate."

"That is plenty good enough for me," the man answered, in good language.

Billy recalled, now, that he had not juggled his aitch at the time when he engaged his cab.

"You 'ave'n't the haccent hof a Londoner," Billy observed. "Hi suppose it is no 'arm to hask where you 'all from? Har' you from Hamerica?"

"Not a bit of harm."

"Then did Hi 'it it right?"

"You did and you didn't, both."

"You har' talkin' hin riddles, now."

"Then try your hand at guessing this one."

"Hob, Hi give it hup; Hi 'ave no 'ead for riddles."

"Well, I was born in London, and lived here till I was ten. Then the gov'nor took it into his head to go to the States, and I lived there until a few years ago."

"Hob, Hi see 'ow it is, then. Hi should like to go hober to Hamerica, hif Hi could raise the wind to get there, for Hi 'ear it is ha bloomin' fine country; but Hi am 'ard down hon me luck; Hi couldn't ire ha dory to Barking Beach."

"What's the matter?"

"Hout hof a job."

"What have you been doing?"

"Hactin' the pilot to ha 'ansom, till ha fortnight hago."

"On your own account?"

"Ho, no; Hi was honly trying 'ard to make ha living for the howner hof it."

"I'll tell you where you might get a place of the same kind— But, no, that's no go, now. No use mentioning it."

Billy knew what the man was on the point of saying, and that he had caught himself in time, not caring to say anything about his own last place of employ.

"Why, 'ave you been hin the same line?" he asked.

"Maybe so."

"Hi 'ard hof one place that Hi tried to get."

"Where was that?"

Billy named the owner of the four-wheeler and the white horse, Peters's former employer.

The man looked hard at him, at this, and Billy saw his eyes dilate and his face slightly pale. He had penetrated the mask and recognized him.

"Hit was where that fellow ran haway from that 'ad the hadventure with the four-wheeler han' white 'orse," Billy rattled on. "But hit was no go, for some hother cove 'ad got 'ead hof me."

Peters was disposing of his drink with huge gulps.

"That was too bad," he said, rising. "Well, good-night."

He started for the door with long strides, but Billy sprang up and leaped after him.

"Old hon!" he cried. "Hi want just ha word with ye, mate. But, Hi can tell 'e houtsid just ha well, so come halong."

He had caught up with him, and while not laying a hand upon him yet, was the first to reach the door, and as Peters passed out, Billy did so at the same time.

The instant the door closed, Peters wheeled and confronted him with a savage scowl upon his face, but he looked into the grim tube of a trusty Smith & Wesson five-shooter.

"Give in," Billy sternly ordered. "I've got a fist of fives here."

"Curse you, what do you mean?"

"I mean that I have been looking for you, Enoch Peters, and that you are not going to give me the slip a second time."

"Who are you?"

"Broadway Billy, of New York."

"I thought so. For God's sake spare me, Billy Weston."

"You will be spared if you are innocent. What do you say on that head? Are you innocent?"

"I am, I swear I am."

"Is that the truth?"

"On my soul it is."

"Then the very best thing you can do is to put your case in my hands and let me sift it out. Will you do that?"

"How can I help myself?"

"If you will come with me to my lodging, well and good; if not, we'll take a walk to Scotland Yard. Say quick which it shall be, before a bobby appears."

"I'll go with you," the fellow quickly elected. "I have heard of you, and I know what's best for my skin. I have been expectin' this, for I knowed I couldn't keep out of your clutches long."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CABMAN TELLS HIS STORY.

WITH a quick movement Broadway Billy snapped a handcuff upon the fellow's right wrist, locking the other loop of it upon his own left, and led him away.

Billy had met with an easier victory than he had anticipated. He had expected nothing short of a fight, in which he would probably have to "wing" his man before he could secure him.

They were quite a distance from Billy's lodging, but walked there, and nothing was said about the matter on the way.

It was not brought up until they were in Billy's room.

There Billy disarmed his man, then released him, and they sat down, Billy retaining his revolver in hand.

"Now, Peters," he said, "I want to know all you can tell me about this matter, and I want a straight story, too. If you lie to me, so much the worse for you."

"I have no reason to lie about it, now," the man made answer. "The worst has happened, just as I expected it would, and I know the best thing I can do is to make a clean breast of the whole business."

"You are right. If you are innocent, why did you run away?"

"For fear that I might get tangled up in the nasty mess, that's all. I wanted to keep out of it if I could."

"Well, your story."

"Where shall I begin?"

"At the beginning, of course."

"Well, on that night I was goin' along High Holborn, when a slim young chap hailed me and I pulled up and got him. He engaged me by the hour, and put down a handsome tip to begin with. Then he told me where to go. It was to that street where that Mr. Keeler lives, and he stopped a little distance from his house. I found out all about it since by the papers, you see."

"Well?"

"He got out and went to that house and asked for somebody. Then he came back to the cab and said he would have to wait, as the person was not at home then. And so we waited, the slim young fellow walking up and down, and I stayin' with my cab waitin' for what was to follow. At last, after a good long wait, a young woman came along at a quick walk, and was about to go into the house when the slim young fellow stopped her and handed her a note. They talked a minute or so, and then both came to the cab and got in, after the man had whispered the directions."

"Where did they go?"

"It was to a suspicious house in a pretty hard quarter, and I knowed that a game of some sort was afoot, but I had no thought that it would be blood. That quarter is a bad one, you know, and I thought something different. Well, we went there, and they got out and I was told to wait, and the fellow gave me another tip the same as the first. Of course I waited. We don't strike gold-mines every day in our line, you see. I waited, and in about an hour the young fellow came out, leading a wo-

man who had a rather unsteady walk, as if she had been drinking. I couldn't say it was the same one, for I hadn't seen her face good, but I thought it wasn't."

"What led you to think it wasn't?"

"Well, the way she was dressed. She looked just like one of the 'ladies' of that street. They got in the cab again, and the young fellow had something under his arm that looked like a folded rubber coat. That's what it was, as I found out afterward. He told me to drive to that place where the body was afterward found, which did not strike me as being just the thing, but I thought he knewed what he was doing so I got up and away we went. By that time it was long past midnight, and when we got to the destination it was a good deal later and the streets were deserted. I had never been there before, and had to go slow and feel my way, and that accounts for my not being heard, I suppose."

"That is the explanation, I have no doubt."

"It was about the worst place I had ever got into, and when I had gone about far enough I stopped to ask the young fellow to pilot me. I got no answer. This rather startled me, and I got down and opened the door. What did I find? There in one corner was the young woman, with a rubber cloak folded around her, but the young man was gone. He had dropped quietly out somewhere on the way, and there I was. I have no doubt he had selected that place by daylight as the best one for his purpose, and told me to go there. Well, I shook the young woman, but she was like as if dead, and I felt something wet on my hand. I looked, by the light of the cab, and it was blood! Lord! my hair was on end! I took it all in at once; the young woman had been murdered, and the young fellow had put her off on my hands."

"I see little reason to doubt your story; it is reasonable."

"Well, just imagine the situation I was in, if you can. What if I was found with such a fare as that in my cab? I could tell the truth, but would anybody believe it? I had got blood on my hand, and on my right hand at that! I looked around, and I didn't see a living soul in sight. It was a dark place, anyway. My only hope was to get rid of my passenger and get out of there, and I lost no time in doing it, you can bet. I half lifted and half dragged the woman out of the cab, and carried her and put her in the doorway where she was found, and there I left her. The rubber cloak had fallen off, and was hanging half out of the door of the cab, and I flung it back in, shut the door, and leaped to the box. You may believe I was in a hurry to get away from there. It was a narrow place to turn, and I jerked my horse back so hard that I almost snapped the hind felines against the curb, I got out of there just as quick as I could, and you know the rest."

"What did you do with the rubber cloak? Have you destroyed that? It might be a clue."

"You bet I destroyed it. It was all blood inside, with no less than seventeen holes in it, where the woman had been stabbed. I tied a stone up in it and walked to Blackfriars Bridge and dropped it into the river."

"What kind of a coat, or cloak, was it?"

"A woman's cloak, or waterproof, to cover the whole person."

"That accounts for so little blood being found in the cab, and led to the mistake of supposing the murder had been done elsewhere and the body put in the cab afterward."

"Yes."

"Now, the question is, would you know that young man again?"

"I'm quite sure I would. I had several good looks at his face, and I don't forget a face easy. I caught onto you, spite of your disguise."

"Well, he must be found."

"Which I don't believe he ever will be."

"I don't agree with you there. I think I can lay hands upon him."

"The deuce! Who is he?"

"I cannot disclose that, yet. I depend on you to identify the person for me, and your safety depends upon our putting the crime where it belongs."

"Yes, I know that, and you have only to tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Now that I am in for it, I must do my best to get out of it, and I trust everything to you."

"You have told me only the truth?"

"True as preaching, every word, just as it happened."

"And you have held nothing back?"

"Not a thing, sir."

"Very well, I will set to work upon the information you have given me. But what am I going to do with you?"

"Let me help you. I swear I'll serve you well, and will be like a dog at your heels, doing your slightest bidding. But, you won't trust me that far, so do as you please with me."

"No, I can't take the chances of your running away. You are too valuable for that, and I had too much trouble in getting hold of you. I have an idea which I think will work all right. Just touch that bell-pull, will you?"

The prisoner did as requested.

In a few moments the door opened and a small boy in sage-green livery minus many buttons bowed in the doorway.

"Come in and shut the door," Billy directed. "I want you to send a message for me with all haste. If you do it promptly there will be a shilling for yourself."

He penciled the message, directed it, and gave it to the boy.

The little fellow was off in a moment, and Billy turned again to his prisoner with a question.

"Where was that house into which the slender young man took the young woman, before the murder was done?" he made inquiry.

"It was No. — street, and you can't miss it. The door is open night and day, and if the murder hadn't followed there wouldn't have been anything mysterious in the affair."

Billy questioned on, while he awaited the response to his message, but the few additional points brought out are scarcely worthy of mention.

CHAPTER XVI.

BILLY GRASPS THE SITUATION.

IN a short time the boy in the green livery was back again, with evidence that the message had been properly dispatched, and received his shilling.

The evening was now well advanced, and it was close upon midnight before the object of the message was realized. Then came a ring at the street bell, and an inquiry for Mr. Weston.

Broadway Billy opened the door of his room and called down to the applicant to come right up.

This the man did, and he was soon in the room.

It was Jeffrey Shears.

"Come as quick as I could," Shears explained immediately. "What is in the wind?"

"Let me introduce to you Mr. Enoch Peters, the driver of the four-wheeler and white horse on the night of the crime," and Billy indicated Peters with a wave of the hand.

"The devil!" the surprised Shears ejaculated.

"No, merely a London cabby," Billy humorously corrected him.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself, sir?" Shears demanded, hotly.

"Keep cool," Billy gently admonished. "Sit down and I will tell you the man's story."

Shears sat down and listened.

"Then he is innocent?" he observed, when Billy had done.

"It appears so. The course he adopted was a natural one, considering the dilemma he was in."

"Yes, that is so, for if he has told the truth it did put him in a bad box, sure enough. But, what have you laid out for me to do?"

"I want you to take charge of the man and see that he does not escape. I do not think he has any intention of trying it, but that is not the thing; he must not be given the chance."

"You can trust me for the keepin' of him, sir."

"Have you a pistol or revolver?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I'll supply you with one. Now, the first thing on the programme is a four-wheeler."

"Where are we going to take him?"

"To Mrs. Neilson's."

"What for?"

"Because I cannot keep him here, and because she will be another who will be careful that he does not escape. It will be a handy place till I want to use him."

"Take me anywhere, it makes no difference," spoke up the prisoner. "I leave it all to you, Mr. Weston."

"And you want me to go get the cab, then," said Shears.

"Yes, and be quick about it."

Shears was off, in due time he returning with the kind of vehicle required, and the prisoner was led out and the three got in.

When they reached their destination they found the house dark, as they had expected, and it required several pulls at the bell to arouse the inmates and get a response from Mrs. Neilson.

When she appeared the situation was quickly

explained to her, and she admitted the men to her apartments.

"You say he is the murderer of my child?" she then demanded.

Her eyes were flashing with vengeful fire.

"No, no," answered Billy, "but he is worth his weight in gold and diamonds as a witness, for he is the only person who can recognize the murderer."

"Oh, yes, I see. And you want me and Jeffrey to keep him here, so that he cannot escape until you want him. You may safely trust us. He wouldn't be any safer in prison."

"Yes, I trust you, or I would not have brought him here. Provide for him and let him sleep. And here, Shears, is the revolver, and a key to the handcuffs. If you have to leave him alone with Mrs. Neilson, handcuff him, Peters, it is necessary."

"It's all right," the cabman declared, resignedly. "I don't blame you, but it is trouble for nothing."

Billy believed the man, but would not take him at his word, since the whole case now hinged upon him. Peters held the key to the whole mystery, and Billy must hold him.

Finally Billy took his leave, and returning to his lodging, went to bed.

He was up bright and early next morning.

It was now his ambition to handle the case alone, so he left the house early in order to avoid Sergeant Cliff, should he call around.

The first business on his programme for the day, as he had mentally sketched it out as far as possible, was to go to the house where the murderer had stopped with his victim.

The less said about this place, the better, perhaps.

He asked for the head of the house, and after some parley and delay a fat woman, some forty years of age, presented herself.

"I am here on business, as I sent you word," said Billy, speaking in his firm manner. "I want to get some information. I will tell you, in short, that I am an agent from Scotland Yard."

The woman's face blanched instantly.

"Good heavens!" she gasped. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing that will give you any trouble, if you give me straight information," Billy rejoined.

"I'll do that, to the best of my ability, sir. Lor', what a shock you gave me. It halmost took haway my breath. But, then, Hi might 'a' known you couldn't want me."

When excited she lost control of her atch, but she forced herself to calmness.

"Do you remember anything that happened here on a certain night last week?" Billy asked, and he gave day and date.

"I do not, sir."

"I'll tell you what it was, then. About midnight, perhaps a little later, a slender young man came here in a four-wheeler drawn by a white horse, and entered your house with a young woman. When they went away the young woman was in different attire, and next morning she was found dead over toward White-chapel with seventeen knife wounds in her body."

"Good 'eavens!" the woman cried, as pale as death again. "His it possible! Then the mystery hof that murder began in my 'ouse?"

"It certainly did," Billy assured her, very grimly.

"But, Hi knowed nothink about it, sir."

"I have not said you did. What I want from you is information, madam."

"You 'ave honly to hask for it, sir. Hanythink I can tell you. Hi'll do it more than willingly."

"Do you know who that young man was?"

"Hi do not, sir."

"Did you see them?"

"Hi did, sir, when they hentered."

"You know what room they occupied, then of course."

"Yes, certainly, sir."

"Had the young man previously engaged it?"

"No, sir; but the woman 'ad, sir. Hi see you har' bound to know all about it, sir."

Billy gave a slight start, inwardly.

Here was support for a suspicion he had, and now he thought he saw his way clear to the end.

"Yes, you may as well tell me all about it," he assured, "and the plainer you make it the less trouble you are likely to get into yourself. Now, go ahead."

The woman had become calm enough to control the erratic letter by this time, and told what she had to tell.

"It was early in the evening," she said, "that a young woman wearing a veil came

here and engaged a room of me for the night. She paid me the price and I gave her the key. I did not know her, and did not care who she was. She went up to the room, and that was the last I saw of her till I saw her come in at the time you speak of, and I did not see either of them again.

Billy was sure he was on the right track, and pushed his inquiries to the extremity, questioning every person in the house who had any recollection of the events in which he was interested, but to quote which would be to extend our romance to the length of a double number, almost.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STREAK OF LUCK.

WHAT information Broadway Billy gathered here may be set forth in a few short paragraphs.

One young woman had noticed a slender young man leaving the room in question about an hour after the time when the head of the house had seen the veiled woman enter it.

He locked the door after him, said nothing, passed quietly out of the house, and that person saw him no more. Another, however, at a very early hour in the morning, saw the veiled woman leave the room, with a bundle under her arm, leaving the key in the lock.

Broadway Billy was satisfied. He was, as said, sure he was now upon the right trail.

One question more would complete the case. "Madam," he reminded, "you said nothing about a bundle when the veiled woman applied to you for the room?"

"I did not think of it, sir, but she had a parcel under her arm. But, I see nothing in that; it was a change of clothes, of course."

"Of course," Billy agreed, but with meaning.

He took his leave, after cautioning them to remain quiet and say nothing.

Hailing a hansom, he gave the address of Mrs. Neilson's house, and settled down to study while jolting along.

While he was thus engaged he paid little attention to the passing panorama without, but gazed rather fixedly for a time at the bottom of the vehicle.

And while he sat thus, something finally claimed his attention. It was a tiny white line, in a crack near one corner of the cab's bottom, and had the appearance of the edge of a bit of paper.

Stooping over, he found that was just what it was, and with a pin he worked it out from its hiding-place.

Not that he thought of finding it of any use to him; he did it idly while thinking.

The instant he looked at it, however, he gave a start.

It was like this:

is very important that you
I will then explain what I
ou can order the driver to
fail me if you love me.
OR HURST.

What had caused Billy to start was the signature, and not that alone, but the writing, for he recognized it at sight as that of Horace Hurst.

What had he discovered here? He could not answer the question. To whom had Horace Hurst written this message, and on what date? What did it signify? The words "if you love me" impressed the detective.

Could it be true, after all, that Hurst was the one who had lured Alma Keeler away from her home, and was he now playing a clever role in order to divert suspicion from himself? Billy could not believe it, and certainly Hurst had had nothing to do with the murder.

But, how had come this fragment of paper here in this cab?

Billy thought of going direct to see Hurst, but on second thought decided to interview the driver first.

Pushing open the small trap-door in the roof of the hansom, he changed his directions to the cabman, telling him now to drive to his own lodging. He had a scheme in mind.

At the next corner the cabby changed his course, and in due time stopped before Broadway Billy's lodging.

"Come in and help me with my luggage," Billy requested, as he sprang out.

He tossed the driver a tip at the same time.

Down the cabby sprang, secured his horse with a curb-weight, and followed his fare into the house and to his room.

Billy stepped to a corner and jerked out a fat traveling bag, upon which he knelt, trying to buckle the strap which passed around it for additional security.

"Lend me a hand, will you?" he asked without looking up.

The cabman stepped forward and stooped to lend his assistance, when click! a pair of handcuffs were upon his wrists in a twinkling.

Broadway Billy sprang to his feet instantly, then, a smile upon his lips and a revolver in his hand, and faced the pale and trembling cabman who was fairly quaking in his boots.

"I've got you at last," spoke Billy, sternly.

"Wh—wh—what does it mean?" the cabman managed to gasp.

"Sit down there and I'll tell you," answered Billy, pointing to a chair.

The fellow obeyed, and Billy continued:

"Now, sir, I want to know what you were up to one night last week," naming the particular time.

"Lor! Hi 'ave been hexpectin' hof it," the driver managed to say. "But, 'ow hever did you find me hout, sir? Who are you, hany'ow?"

"I am Billy Weston, of New York," Billy saw fit to satisfy him. "How I found you out does not matter, so long as I have landed you. Now, sir, I want you to make a clean breast of the whole business."

"Hi don't wonder they calls you the London Leecog, sir. Yes, Hi'll tell you all about it, sir. Seein' as 'ow Hi'm in for it, Hi want to get hout again, for Hi am as innocent as you har', sir, hof any 'arm to hanybody. My name is Sam Quart, an' Hi'm a honest man, sir."

"Then why didn't you go to the police like a man and tell what you knew?"

"Lor! Hi was hafraid hof gettin' tangled hup in it, don't ye know. Hevery man for 'imself, says Hi."

"Well, your story, then."

"Hit is soon told, sir. That night a young woman with a vail 'ailed mean' gave me ha note an' a card to take to ha certain 'ouse. She said Hi would get a fare there, hand she tipped me 'andsomely. Hi went, has you may suppose, hand there Hi was told to wait at the corner hof the street. Hi waited, and presently ha young woman appeared, gave me directions, and got hit."

"What was the direction?" asked Billy.

The driver gave it, and continued:

"Hi went to the place, where the young woman got hout, and tellin' me to wait for her she pulled the tinkler han' went in. Hi waited, hand it was a good long wait, too. Hat last she came hout and told me to drive to the corner hof the same street where Hi 'ad picked 'er hup, hand there Hi left 'er. She paid me well, and Hi thought no more about it till Hi saw 'er face hin the papers next hafternoon, and the news that she 'ad been murdered, and Hi made hup my mind that the best thing for me to do was to keep shady."

"And that is all you know about it?"

"It is."

"And the young woman you took to that house was the same one who came away with you?"

"Why, to be sure hit was. Hi 'ad me heyces with me, sir, and Hi 'ad several good looks at 'er face. Hi knowed 'er the hinstant Hi saw 'er face hin the papers."

"All right, I see you are honest about the matter, and I understand how it was, now. I have no reason to hold you, so I let you go free," removing the handcuffs. "I am not done with you, though."

"What more do 'e want, then?"

"I want you to drive me to that same house. Do not attempt any tricks, or I will land you in Scotland Yard so quick it will make your head swim."

"Hi 'ave no desire to try to trick you, sir," rejoined the driver, humbly. "Hi will take you there, hof course. Come halong."

Billy had read his man and knew he could trust him, now. He had every reason to believe his story was true.

They went out, and in due time were at their destination.

"Anchor your horse again," Billy directed. "I want you to come in with me, for I may have use for you. Serve me well and I'll let you off easy."

The driver obeyed, and then Billy pulled the bell.

It was a miserable, old-fashioned house, very small, and was in a very old and narrow court.

The door was opened by a weazen-faced old woman, who merely showed her face in the crack, but Billy forced the door open wide open and seized her immediately.

She was scared half out of her life, and her effort to scream was only a poor little croak.

"Shut up!" Billy commanded. "No one is going to hurt you, old fool!"

"What do you want, good gentlemen, what do you—"

"We have come for the lady."

The old hag tried to parley, but Billy impressed upon her that he meant business, and she was soon willing to lead the way to a certain room.

The door was secured on the outside, but she opened it, and as it swung open it revealed Alma Keeler standing in the middle of the room, miserably clad in old garments.

Her face was pale and wan, and her eyes showed signs of much weeping, and she looked at Broadway Billy half in hope and half in fear, hardly knowing whether to hail him friend or foe. A word from Billy assured her which it was, promptly enough.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE TOILS AT LAST.

DAN QUART, the cabby, was gazing at the young woman in open-mouthed amazement.

"Hif it isn't the young woman Hi brought 'ere, Hi'm blowed!" he ejaculated. "But, blarst it, 'ow is it? This can't be this one, but the hother."

"Yes, it is the one you brought here," agreed Billy, "but not the one you took away with you." Then turning to the unfortunate prisoner, "Miss, we have come to take you away from here."

"Thank God!" the glad exclaim.

"But, you must decide where you will be taken," Billy added. "Shall it be home to your uncle or to your lover, Horace Hurst? or to Clark Summerfield?"

At mention of that name the girl's face grew ashy for one second, but the next moment it was aflame like a rose.

"Where is he?" she demanded breathlessly.

"What do you know about him?"

"He employed me to find you, at any cost, and he is at the — Hotel awaiting report from me."

"Take me to him."

"Very well. Old woman, bring the young lady her proper clothes."

"They are no longer here," the young woman hastened to say. "They were worn away by that other."

"Then hers must be here," said Billy. "Bring them. Do you hear, old hag? If you do not want a cell in prison, get a move on you, and do my bidding!"

The hideous old thing scrambled away, mumbling to herself, but presently returned bringing the things required, and all withdrew from the room while Alma made the exchange of raiment.

As soon as she came forth Billy conducted her to the hansom, and ordered the cabby to drive them to the — Hotel.

Arriving, Billy led the young lady immediately to Summerfield's room.

The young man was there, waiting for news. He sprang to his feet, seeing who it was, and for a moment the lovers stood staring at each other. The next moment they were clasped in each other's embrace.

"That settles that part of the business, I take it," Billy observed, smiling. "You had better call in a minister and make a go of it. But, Mr. Summerfield, don't go away from here, for I will send for you soon on important business."

"I'll take your advice in both matters," the young man answered, his face aglow with happiness.

Billy hurried away, taking his cab once more.

This time it was to Horace Hurst's.

He reached there just in time, for Hurst was leaving the house as the cab drew up.

"Come and get in," Billy called to him. "Was coming to see you, but we can talk in the cab just as well. I have made a discovery."

Hurst entered, eagerly enough, and Billy directing the cabman back again to his own lodging, they rattled off in that direction. And as soon as they had started Hurst asked:

"What have you discovered?"

"This," Billy answered.

He handed him the fragment of paper he had found.

Hurst took it, looked at it, and then in a moment his face grew pale and red by turns.

"When did you write that, and to whom?" Billy severely demanded.

"I did not write it," was the answer. "I never saw it before in my life Mr. Weston."

"Do you mean to tell me it is not your writing?" Billy demanded. "Have I not seen enough of your hand to recognize it? What is the use of denying it?"

"I do deny it, most emphatically. I did not write this. It is a good imitation of my hand, I have to admit, but it is that only. Where did you get it? What is its import?"

"If you are not the author of it, you can understand as much about it as I. Suppose that it was addressed to Alma Keeler, what we can make out of these few words would indicate that she had been lured from home in your name, and that she went in a cab."

"That is so; it proves itself."

"Well, who could imitate your hand so well?"

"I do not know, nor can I guess with what object, sir."

"Well, I am inclined to believe you, but I am obliged to arrest you."

"What?"

"You are my prisoner. Remain perfectly quiet, or it will be the worse for you. With this proof against you, I cannot let you go until this matter is cleared up. Don't think of trying to escape."

Billy had drawn a revolver from his hip and held it in his hand.

Hurst was pale to the lips, and madly protested, but Billy was inexorable, and he now re-directed the driver to Scotland Yard.

Arriving there, Billy entered with his prisoner, and sought an interview with the inspector, which was granted. And the result was, that Horace Hurst was detained on suspicion.

As soon as the interview with the inspector was over, Billy returned to the cab and was driven to the home of Mrs. Neilson.

There he found Jeffrey Shears on duty and his first prisoner perfectly safe, and Billy held a consultation with Shears.

The result of it was, that Billy, Shears and Peters left the house together, and Billy then dismissed his caddy.

He had taken the fellow's name and address, and by consulting a directory at the Yard had found that they had been given straight. He could depend upon Sam Quart if he needed him again.

They now engaged a four-wheeler, and Billy gave directions to the house where he knew Flora Floyd to be domiciled.

"I'm now going to put you to the test," he said to Enoch Peters. "You will be brought face to face with the murderer of Edma Neilson, and you must recognize the person in spite of disguise."

"I believe I can do it," Peters assured. "I won't make any mistake, anyhow. If I'm not sure I'll say so."

"That is enough."

Arriving at their destination, Billy got out and rung the bell.

"I want to see Flora Floyd," he announced.

"Or rather, a person here in the cab, who cannot get out, desires to see her. Kindly tell her to run down quickly."

The house-porter understood, and went to deliver the word.

There were a few moments of waiting, and then the door opened and a young woman came out.

Billy had returned to the door of the cab which he held partly open, and he nodded to the young woman and motioned her to approach.

Billy's likeness had been published in the papers, but he was now in a slight disguise, and the young woman did not recognize him. She tripped lightly down to the curb, her face slightly pale.

It was as if she half feared something, and had good reason to be afraid.

She looked into the cab, and the instant her eyes caught the face of Enoch Peters she turned deathly white, and had to grab one of the wheels for support.

"Do you know that man, Flora Floyd?" Broadway Billy asked.

"No, no!" she cried, frenzied. "I am ill—I—I—Let us get back into the house."

"By heavens!" exclaimed Peters, who had been staring at the young woman, "if she wasn't in petticoats I'd swear it was the same person, Mr. Weston!"

"It is the same person," Billy assured him. "Get out, Shears, with your man, and we will take the young woman back into the house and to her room or rooms. There we will make a search."

The young woman was trembling so that her limbs almost refused to bear her up, and had to be supported.

Billy had told the driver to wait, and they all went in and to the girl's room.

She had been handcuffed, so she could not do herself harm.

A thorough search was made of the room, and the truth was brought to light. Billy found more than ample proof to make his case complete.

He found some letters the young woman had received, and he recognized the paper and the writing. They were the same as the writing and paper of the note which had been received by him calling his attention to her.

There was a small stove in the room, with a pipe that entered a hole near the ceiling. Lower down was another hole, not in use, and as Billy was searching every nook and corner, this could not escape his notice. He drew out the tin cap which closed the hole, and thrust in his hand.

As he did so, the young woman prisoner fell back in her chair with a moan, and fainted, and as Billy drew his hand out again he held in his grasp a keen, slender-bladed, double-edged dagger. Nothing of the clothing worn by Edma Neilson could be found, but the stove would account for the disposition of that, and in the ashes Billy found numerous buttons, etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GRAND DEVOUEMENT.

BROADWAY BILLY had made no mistake; the murderer of Edma Neilson was in his hands.

She was brought to, out of her faint, and tearfully confessed her guilt. Confession, however, was not needed; the proof was more than enough.

She told her story in full, holding nothing back, now that it was useless to do so, and what she revealed rounded out the whole, except upon one point—the mystery of her terrible mistake.

She had intended to kill Alma Keeler, and thought she had until the newspapers apprised her of her mistake.

That point, however, has been made clear to the reader.

Billy dismissed Jeffrey Shears, telling him to return with Peters to Mrs. Neilson's, and he sent for Sergeant Cliff to join him here.

In about an hour the sergeant was on hand.

"Been looking all over for you," he declared.

"How have you managed to keep out of the way all day?"

"I have been on the go," Billy truthfully answered. "The case is ended, and now it remains only to make the *denouement* and surprise the natives."

"What? The mystery solved?"

"Yes."

"Who is the murderer?"

"This young woman."

"Impossible."

"The fact, nevertheless."

Billy told the whole matter to the astonished sergeant, and when he had done, Cliff exclaimed:

"By Jove! we well named you when we called you the London Lecoq. Not a man in the Yard could have handled the case like that. But, there is a missing link to be supplied."

"And you are the man to supply it. I want you to go to Mrs. Neilson's, not as coming from me, but as if acting on your own account, and scare her into a confession. There was some scheme afoot to displace Alma Keeler and put Edma Neilson in her place."

"I will get it out of them, or scare them into it."

"And, by the way, stay right there for a time, but join me at four o'clock at the Keeler residence, bringing Mrs. Neilson, Jeffrey Shears, and the prisoner with you."

"Then the *denouement* will take place there at that time?"

"Yes. I will take it upon myself to invite the inspector to be present at my reception."

Both detectives laughed, and Cliff soon took his leave. Billy had asked him to send a messenger boy as he went along, and in due time the lad came.

Billy wrote notes to the various persons interested, asking them to be present at Mr. Keeler's residence at four o'clock, sharp, and sent one to Mr. Keeler himself to apprise him.

He slighted the newspaper reporters, but some of them got wind of it without thanks to him.

At four o'clock they were on hand.

When the time drew on, Broadway Billy permitted his prisoner to prepare for the street, and when she had done so he handcuffed her again, and they set out.

Arriving at the Keeler residence Billy found Mr. Keeler moving about in a very nervous manner, rather excited, as he naturally would

be, under the circumstances, and Billy and his prisoner were ushered into the drawing-room.

A few others were there, and in a little while all had arrived who were invited.

The doors were then shut, and a man in plain clothes and dull, silent boots stood at each door, as if there on sufferance, but really they were Scotland Yard men on guard.

All were silent, waiting for some one to act, and all eyes soon turned to Broadway Billy. It was then that Billy rose in his place and calmly took hold of the business in hand. He first made request of Mr. Keeler to have a quantity of writing-paper brought for use.

This the master of the house called for, and it was speedily forthcoming.

A table in the middle of the room had been cleared, and the paper was laid upon that. It was not all of one kind, but of two sorts.

Broadway Billy stepped forward to the table, and picking up the paper, or a sheet of each kind, examined it carefully. Then he laid it down, and took some letters from his pocket.

"Mr. Inspector," he said, to the great London police chieftain, "will you do me the favor to examine this paper, and compare it with the paper on which this note and these letters were written?"

Mr. Keeler was heard to make a gasping sound, and those who looked at him saw him tightly clutching the arms of his chair, his face like death.

The inspector made the examination as requested, and announced the result.

"The same paper, sir," he said. "Additional proof, here is the identical half-sheet from which this of the note was torn."

"That being the case," said Billy, calmly, "I charge Edwin Keeler with being the chief instigator of the murder that has been done. You will do well to place him under arrest."

Greatest excitement instantly prevailed, and all eyes were turned upon the accused man. He was white and his face was terribly drawn, while perspiration stood on his forehead. He tried to rise, but fell back. He tried to speak, but could not. He could only stare.

"We have found," said Broadway Billy, addressing the company, "that this man is a gambler. His heart and soul are in it. It has swallowed his own little fortune, all the money he could borrow, and he had nothing upon which to live until his niece should come into her father's estate. He has already spent everything else this young lady had."

"The end was near for him, unless something could be done speedily. The end would come even before his niece would come into her property. What was he to do? He resolved to do the very worst. Should his niece die, he would step into the estate immediately, and he sought a plan for putting her out of the way. He had forbidden her marrying one Clark Summerfield, because he was an honest man and one whom the rascal could not corrupt."

"It was arranged that she should marry Horace Hurst, but the old rascal was to appear to oppose that, too, in order to make the girl obstinate and so let her fall into the trap in her way. This would never have been accomplished, however, if it had not been made to appear that Summerfield was dead. Proof of this was furnished by Hurst, and the young lady believed it. Keeler, meantime, knew of the secret relations between Hurst and one Flora Floyd, and he wrote anonymous letters to this young woman, informing her of Hurst's intention to marry, and whom."

"Keeler knew the desperate and almost insane jealousy of this young woman, and by hint and suggestion he as good as laid out the plan of action for her to follow, in these letters, which, as we have proof, were written by him. There is no room for denial. In the meantime another scheme was on foot. The woman Neilson, mother of the murdered girl, desired to remove Alma Keeler and put her own daughter in her place, and plans were laid to that end. She allowed the daughter to manage the matter in her own way. This Edma undertook to do, and would perhaps have accomplished her end, but for the interference of Flora Floyd."

"Edma Neilson somehow got hold of a page of Hurst's handwriting, and imitating it, wrote a note to Alma Keeler, asking her to come at once to a certain house, the address of which was on an accompanying card. She sent a cab for her, and ended the note by telling her not to fail if she loved him—Hurst. Alma fell into the trap. She was taken to a lonesome old house, where Edma and an old hag made her prisoner, and where Edma forced an exchange of clothing with her—and not an exchange, either, for Alma

was given some old rags belonging to the hag. And there she was to be kept in imprisonment until death might come to her relief, or until Providence moved to release her. And her work done, Elma Neilson set out for the Keeler home, in Alma's clothes, to pass herself off for Alma.

"But, it happened that on the same night Flora Floyd had her scheme ready for operation, and when Elma, as Alma, came home, she was met by a young man at the steps who had a message for her from Horace Hurst. This young man was Flora Floyd, in disguise, and the message was a decoy. In order to strengthen the deception she had undertaken, Elma obeyed the summons at once, and entered the cab with the messenger, as the young man purported to be. Once in the cab she was partly overcome by a pungent drug, and rendered helpless so far as her will was concerned. She was taken to a place I will not name, and there was robbed of her identity, as nearly as possible, after which she was placed in the cab again, the young man still accompanying her—and he her insane rival, Flora Floyd. And there, in the cab, helpless, she was insanely stabbed again and again with this weapon."

The sensation produced when Billy displayed the weapon is perhaps better imagined than described.

The dagger, by the way, was worthy a place in the Black Museum.

CHAPTER XX. CONCLUSION.

BROADWAY BILLY's address was a long one, and he brought out every point fully, leaving nothing untouched.

His statements were backed up by the confessions made, including that of the miserable scoundrel, Keeler, and that of the woman Neilson, proved by Jeffrey Shears. The reader has had it all in the preceding pages.

All the witnesses and prisoners in the case were there; the woman of the unmentionable house, the old hag who had held Alma prisoner, the two cabbies, Peters and Quart; Horace Hurst, Flora Floyd, and others. And last, but not least, Clark Summerfield and his bride, Alma herself.

There was amazement when these made themselves known and Alma acknowledged her marriage to the man she truly loved.

When all was over, the prisoners were led away to the fate awaiting them.

Broadway Billy was the hero of the hour. He was highly complimented by the inspector, and all Scotland Yard held him in envy.

Edwin Keeler died that same night in jail, of a heart trouble, it was said, and that was undoubtedly the fact of the matter.

Flora Floyd was never brought to trial, for in a day or two she went raving mad and had to be confined in a mad-house. She did not live a great while, and never regained her reason.

Horace Hurst found it to his advantage to get out of the country as soon as freed, and the others were dealt with according to their deserts. This included Jeffrey Shears and the woman Neilson, but they were shown great clemency; Providence had already punished them, it was said.

As for Broadway Billy, he did not see the matter to its final ending, for a letter, followed immediately by a cablegram, from New York, caused him to pack his travelling bag and proceed without loss of time to Paris. Scotland Yard feted him before he was allowed to depart, however.

THE END.

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